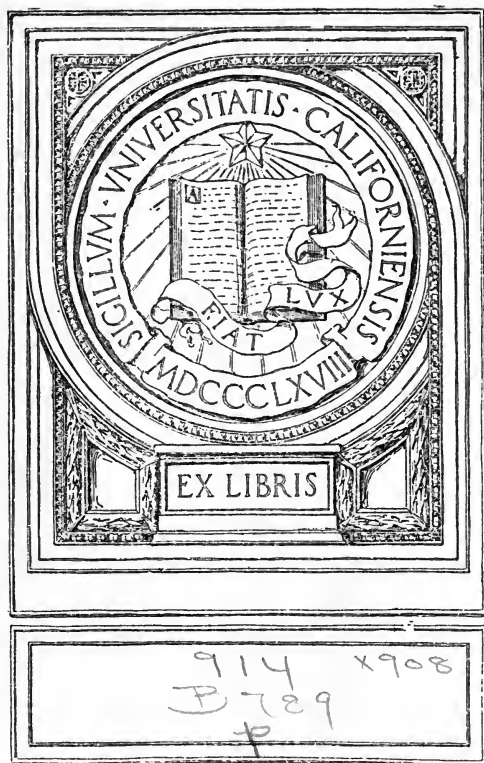
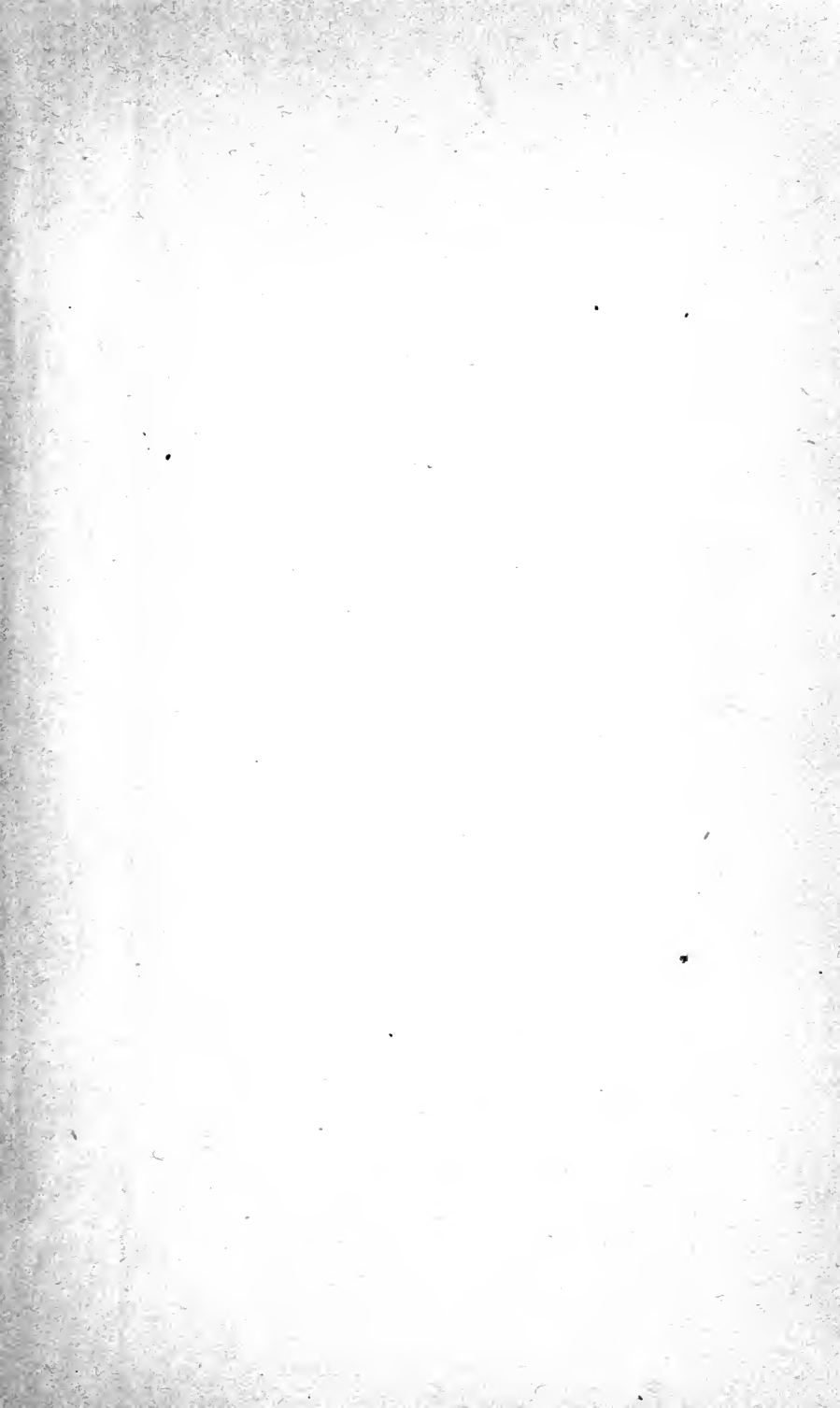


A  
PELICAN'S TALE

By FRANK M. BOYD





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**A PELICAN'S TALE**





To read  
August 1900



*Photo.*

*Draycott*

THE AUTHOR

A  
PELICAN'S TALE

FIFTY YEARS OF LONDON  
AND ELSEWHERE

BY  
FRANK M. BOYD

PHILADELPHIA  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
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A PELICAN'S TALE



# A PELICAN'S TALE

## CHAPTER I

My birth and parentage. A really conscientious objector—Giving up a fortune for a belief—The start of things—Sir James Simpson, the inventor of chloroform, helps—His sealskin coat and waistcoat—St. Andrews days—A seat of learning—Golf—And baps—What the head of Fettes said—Tom Morris the Grand Old Man of Golf—"Young Tom"—A place full of eminent people—Bishop Wordsworth and the rook's eggs—Shedding my blood in their defence—A brief chronicle of celebrities—Concerning Charles Kingsley—"When all the world is young"—A modest vocalist—At Pat's—Some famous old boys—A headmaster who believed in leather—Sir Douglas Haig's first school—St. Andrews heroes—The medal day on the links—Mr. Arthur Balfour as Captain of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club—A famous playwright—A Royal Captain—How he forfeited the good opinion of the golf caddies.

**T**O most of us the term Conscientious Objector has no pleasant sound, and suggests one who shamefully shirked his job, and for the sake of his skin or his purse, or both, placed painful, disagreeable, and dangerous duties, rightfully his own, upon the shoulders of others.

But there are exceptions to all rules, and when one finds a man giving up a considerable fortune

and resigning very brilliant financial and other prospects for what he conceives to be his duty, one can at least understand his point of view, even if one may not entirely sympathise with it.

In such case was my father, the late Very Rev. A. K. H. Boyd, D.D., Minister of the First Charge of the Parish of St. Andrews—such is the official style and title—who gave up much in order to follow the dictates of his heart, when he forsook the English Bar to become, as his great grandfather, his grandfather, and his father had been before him, a minister of the Kirk of Scotland.

He was the favourite nephew of Mr. Hutchinson, one of the greatest and most prosperous London solicitors of his time, and had been as a young man practically adopted by this relative. It was planned that he was to be Mr. Hutchinson's heir, and that he was to go to the English Bar, where, owing to the briefs the firm could and would send him, a second fortune seemed assured. But after becoming a member of the Middle Temple, the young man came to the conclusion that he was meant for the Church, and greatly to the venerable solicitor's disgust, gave up his brilliant prospects and became a clergyman, and by so doing was promptly cut out of his uncle's will, that legal luminary expressing the opinion that if his nephew was mad enough to prefer the Kirk of Scotland with no prospects to speak of, to a practically assured position at the English Bar,

he was no fit person to have the control of the Hutchinson fortune. And there that part of the matter ended.

Let it be said here once and for all, that my father never for one moment regretted the course he then took. I mention this merely because one has several times read contrary statements made by writers who obviously did not know their facts.

A. K. H. B. did well by the Church of his Fathers, and the Church did well for him in return, for after a time she gave him one of her prize livings, for such St. Andrews is, and in due season called upon him to serve his year of office as Moderator of the General Assembly, which is the highest honour in his own calling a minister of the Kirk can come to.

St. Andrews was A. K. H. B.'s fourth living, for in addition to having been assistant at St. George's, Edinburgh, he had been Minister of Newton-on-Ayr ; of Kirkpatrick-Irongray, close to Dumfries ; and of St. Bernard's, Edinburgh, and it was in " Auld Reekie " on the first day, of the second month, of the third year of the Sixties, that I made my first appearance on any stage, being aided in my arrival by Sir James Simpson, an intimate friend of my parents, a great physician, and, as everyone knows, the inventor of chloroform, which has done so much to deaden the agony of suffering millions.

One can but dimly imagine through a mist of horror, what a surgical operation must have been like before the coming of chloroform, when the unfortunate patient was dosed with whisky or brandy till more or less senseless, was strapped down to the operating table, and was then duly performed upon. It is not to be wondered at that in those days "grand" operations were usually fatal. The marvel is that any of them ever succeeded.

Of Sir James Simpson, whom I came to know as a child, my chief recollections are, of his very kindly face, his long grey hair which fell over the collar of the sealskin coat and waistcoat, and which he, like Du Maurier's Svengali, always wore, and of an unforgettable fragrance of sherry, which seemed to be attached to him, for I was usually taken to see him after luncheon, and the great doctor, with sound judgment no doubt, believed in doing himself as well as might be at his meals.

Although I was born in Edinburgh, my earliest recollections are of St. Andrews, whither I was brought at the mature age of two, and where are to be found among many other excellent things, the oldest University in Scotland, the most famous golf links in the world, and the finest baps in creation ; and as such things are but little known on this side of the Tweed, let me hasten to explain that a bap is a species of breakfast roll of most admirable quality, seldom to be encountered out



*Photo.*

*Rodger, St. Andrews*

THE VERY REV. A. K. H. BOYD, D.D., LL.D.





of Scotland, and assuredly never to be found in greater perfection than in the Capital of Golfland, though I recall the late Dr. Potts, first and perhaps greatest headmaster of Fettes College, mentioning upon the occasion of encountering one of these things at St. Andrews, that he had known its equal when a boy at Shrewsbury. The statement seemed to me and my brethren wellnigh incredible, and verging very close upon blasphemy.

Of St. Andrews children it has been said by no less an authority than grand old Tom Morris, most famous of golfers, who controlled the links for many years, and whose portrait painted by Sir George Reid, R.S.A., hangs in a pride of place on the wall of the chief room in the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, that they are "born with webs to their feet and clubs in their hands," significant of the facts that youthful St. Andreans of both sexes learn to swim, and to play the Scottish national game, very early, and very well; and, like many another St. Andrews youngster, I received my earliest lessons in the great game from "Old Tom."

Even at a period when he must have been a young man, Tom Morris was always known as "Old Tom," no doubt to distinguish him from the still greater golfer—perhaps the greatest player who ever lived—"Young Tom Morris," champion golfer of the world for several years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It would be a privilege to write here of the two famous players, whose names at least are familiar in whatever part of the world the

St. Andrews was always remarkable alike for the number of distinguished literary people who dwelt in it permanently, and for those who came to see it, and then usually returned to it again and again, for the place is full of fascination, and Carlyle spoke the bare truth when he said of it, "Grand place St. Andrews. You have there the essence of all the antiquities of Scotland in good and clean condition."

To name the famous people who even in one's own recollection were connected with the place, would fill more space than can be spared, but one thinks of grand looking Principal Tulloch of St. Mary's College, of Principal Shairp of St. Salvator's, of Mrs. Oliphant, of Dean Stanley of Westminster, Mr. Froude, Sir John Millais, and of Bishop Wordsworth, in whose trees one used to bird-nest. In this connection I do not forget how, upon an occasion, the fine old Bishop discovered me descending from one of his trees, my cap full of crow's eggs, and devoid of speech by reason of my mouth containing another. "I know," said he, with great tact, placing his hand upon my shoulder instead of on my head, "that you wouldn't steal the rooks' eggs, and I am quite sure

game is played, but the thing has already been done so well and so fully by my old friend the Rev. Dr. W. W. Tulloch in his admirable *Life of Tom Morris* that to try to do so would savour almost of impertinence. Old Tom was in every way a celebrity, a great and good man. It was my privilege to write the first interview which appeared of Tom Morris in the *Dundee Advertiser* at a time when such things were regarded with greater favour than is now the case.

you only climbed up to look at them. You see I am an old man, and it is a great pleasure to me to see and hear the crows. If anyone took their eggs they might fly away, and I should feel their going very much."

I had risked my limbs to get those eggs, but I risked them again to put them back, when the dear old man had gone; and not only did I never again take more of them, but I afterwards constituted myself the special guardian of the Bishop's rookery, and shed my blood in its defence on several notable occasions in combat with would-be marauders.

Bishop Wordsworth was not merely a great scholar, but was also a great athlete. He had much to do with the institution of the University Boat Race, and in the first of these contests he himself stroked the Oxford boat, while his brother the Bishop of Lincoln pulled stroke for Cambridge, and, as no doubt many persons are aware, he was at one time Mr. Gladstone's tutor. When the pupil became Prime Minister, it seemed likely that anything the Church of England had to offer might have come his way, more especially as he would have been quite equal to it, but for reasons which it is not needful to go into here, Wordsworth and Gladstone had agreed to differ upon certain subjects, and as a result a poor Scottish Bishopric was the best that came the good Bishop's way.

The Blackwoods of the famous magazine, although of course mainly associated with Edinburgh, were also closely connected with St. Andrews, and during the last twenty-five years of his life, Mr. John Blackwood abode at Strathtyrum, a fine place within a mile of the ancient city, while Mr. Chambers, of *Chambers' Journal*, lived on and off in a house on the famous Scores, facing the North Sea, and Mrs. Tweedale, the well-known novelist, when Miss Violet Chambers, was one of the earliest lady golfers to play upon the links proper, as opposed to the Ladies' Putting Green, up till then considered to afford strenuous enough sport for the fairer sex.

One could go on recalling famous people innumerable who either lived at St. Andrews or came periodically to it, like Mrs. Lyn Lynton, Dean Liddell, Dr. Liddon of St. Paul's, who seeing the grand old ruins of the cathedral, beneath the walls of which so many illustrious sons and daughters of St. Andrews lie in their last sleep, said, "Take my word for it, this church *will* be rebuilt." It may be that one day Liddon's prophecy will come true; but it seems an unlikely thing for many reasons, one that it would cost quite half a million of money to do it.

Matthew Arnold came there, Sir Theodore Martin, when Lord Rector of the University, accompanied by Lady Martin, much more famous as Helen Faucit, the greatest actress of her day,

Macready's leading lady, Andrew Lang, and so on. To mention them all would be to write down the names of many of the most distinguished men and women of letters.

Of the coming of Charles Kingsley to the home of my childhood, I have special recollections. Everyone liked the author of *The Water Babies*, and he loved children, a love which all his little friends most cordially returned.

In these very youthful days I am told I possessed rather a nice singing-voice, but my modesty was such, that I could seldom be prevailed upon to perform outside my own nursery, and even then my best efforts occurred while concealed below the table, the centre leg tightly clasped to my bosom.

One evening, after my nursery tea, I was alone in my kingdom, my female guardian having left me for a time, and, seated under my table, I was singing away to myself for all I was worth, my song being the famous "When all the World is Young," from *The Water Babies*. As I sang, a corner of the table-cloth was pulled up, and I saw a kindly, grave face, looking at me very intently. The owner of the face was on his hands and knees, and, struck dumb by the apparition, I ceased my song with a snap. "Don't stop," said my visitor, "just sing me that last verse over again," and I said I would provided he left me under my table and withdrew to a judicious

distance ; and when I had finished, the kind-looking gentleman pulled me out from my fastness, put me on his knee, and kissed me. And then I saw that he had been crying. Later on in recounting the happening to my nurse, and seeking for information as to my visitor, I was told that he was Mr. Kingsley, who had come to stay with us for a time. He often called on me in my nursery, and won my affection by the stories he told me, which he said were good for me, and by the sweets he gave me, which he was equally positive were bad for me. However, with the sweets and the stories we got on very well together, and Charles Kingsley was my earliest and best-loved hero. Little children are usually uncommonly keen judges of character, and if they approve of a man or woman, there is as a rule not much the matter with either. All children loved dear Charles Kingsley.

St. Andrews was always a famous seat of learning, not merely for students—as the undergraduates are called—at the University, but for boys as well. At the present time it possesses, in St. Leonard's, one of the largest and most famous schools for girls in the country. In my day there were lots of schools to choose from, for in addition to St. Leonard's, at that time a boys' school conducted by Dr. Browning, there were the big Madras College, Abbey Park, Hodge's, Blunt's, and Clifton Bank, the last named being commonly



*Photo.*

*Mason & Co.*

CHARLES KINGSLEY





known as "Pat's" for the reason that its headmaster was Dr. Paterson, a very tall, stern, kindly-hearted Domine of the old school, who believed in a somewhat liberal use of the tawse, as the leather weapon of chastisement was known. Perhaps the cane prevails to-day in Scotland, as it did and does in this country, but in my time of suffering, tawse were the terror of evil-doers, and, as I can personally vouch, were a very sufficient reason for acquiring such knowledge as was deemed needful. Dr. Paterson was amongst those who cordially believed in the virtues of leather.

It was to this school that I was sent in due course, a school which, although not a very large one, produced some boys who became notable men. It was Sir Douglas Haig's first seat of learning, and there the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces acquired his primary instructions, and perchance wallopings. Of this I am unable to speak with authority, for Haig was before my time. But another distinguished soldier was there with me, although he was my senior in age by a short distance, and my superior in ability by a very long way. He was General Sir David Henderson, K.C.B. and D.S.O.—who had so much to do with the making of our Air Service, of which he was Director-General for several years. As everyone knows, Sir David is a very gallant and distinguished soldier, and in these days when he

has become a great man, and can well afford to smile at minor matters, I am sure he won't mind my recalling the time when he was head-boy at Pat's, and was known as "Porri Henderson," the nickname being a diminutive of porridge, of which he was either inordinately fond, or held in extreme abhorrence—I cannot now recall which.

There were other notable future soldiers among the boys of St. Andrews at that period, and among them one specially recalls, poor Major "Mauray" Meiklejohn of the Gordon Highlanders, who won the V.C. so gallantly in the Boer War and lost his arm in so doing, and who, it will be remembered, met his end by being thrown from a restive horse at a review in Hyde Park, a curiously trivial and tragic finish to so gallant a career. Then there was Captain Ernest Towse, also of the Gordons, who likewise gained the greatest distinction a soldier or sailor may come by, in Africa, when he lost his precious sight. There was Freddy Tait, too, of the Black Watch, who gave his life for his country in the Boer War, and was one of the best amateur golfers who ever lived, as well as one of the most amiable of men.

Never was there a more popular occasion on St. Andrews links than when Freddy Tait won the gold medal presented by King William IV with the fine score of 78, a year which was specially memorable in the annals of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, for the reason that Mr. Balfour was

Captain of the Club, and "struck off" at the start of the competition, to the booming of the little cannon, which is fired at the beginning and at the finish of the Medal Day at St. Andrews.

Captain Robert Marshall, the well-known playwright, who died in the midst of his success, was a Madras boy at that time, and I well remember how he gave me the outlines of his first play *Shades of Night*, and asked me to whom he should submit it, as he was new to London stage-land at that period. I suggested Mr. Forbes Robertson, as Sir Johnston then was, and the piece was duly accepted and produced by him at the Lyceum Theatre. Afterwards in quick succession came *His Excellency the Governor*, *A Royal Family*, produced at the Court, and other plays. Marshall's best work was *The Second in Command*, which it will be remembered had a long run at the Haymarket. In his plays Marshall usually described circumstances and people he was familiar with, for he had seen a deal of service both at home and abroad, and had been, among other things, A.D.C. to the Governor of Natal. Poor Arthur Playfair the well-known actor who died so sadly at Brighton, and who was a grandson of Sir Hugh Lyon Playfair, a famous Provost of St. Andrews, also spent his boyhood in the classic place.

Harking back to the Medal Day at St. Andrews, and to many famous Captains of the Royal and Ancient, one recalls the year when the late Prince

Leopold, as the Duke of Albany was then styled, was Captain, and duly struck off on the great occasion. Of course all St. Andrews was at the Teeing ground to see him do the deed, but the shot His Royal Highness made was not a specially brilliant one, despite the coaching he had received from Tom Morris on the previous day.

The golf caddies, keen judges of men and matters, were there in force ready to estimate the merits of the Prince by his stroke, and when that occurred and was found to be somewhat lacking, one of these candid critics, in a voice which I fear our royal visitor must have heard, gave vent to the historical opinion, "He may be the Queen's son, and the deil himsel', but he canna play gough a damn."

Golf is played everywhere now, and there are links innumerable all round London, and indeed all over the country, but thirty-five years ago, when I first came as a lad to the Capital, those at Wimbledon and Blackheath were the only familiar ones, and people generally were curiously ignorant of the most rudimentary points connected with the game. Thus it was that a very distinguished lady to whom I had the honour of being presented, during my earliest days in town, expressed special interest in my humble self because I had come from "the Newmarket of Golf." "Now," said she, "you can tell me whether at St. Andrews they play with wooden or with iron golfs?"

It was too Herculean a task to even attempt to enlighten such darkness, and, realizing the absolute hopelessness of the situation, I merely murmured: "With both," which reply appeared to give complete satisfaction, and all was well.

## CHAPTER II

At school and what I learned—Little that was of any use to me in after life—A knowledge of Shakespeare and how it was acquired—A Chair of general information badly needed—What lads of the time read—*The Boys of England* and *The Sons of Britannia*—Jack Harkaway and Tom Wildrake—Two wondrous heroes—What Robert Louis Stevenson thought—My toy theatre—A youthful impressario—Something of a chemist—An indifferent fireman—The end of my penance—Settling my future career—The Tay Bridge disaster nearly puts an end to this—In Germany generally and Düsseldorf in particular—I fancy I am to be a painter—No one else does so, however—Distinguished artists who were fellow-students—The great day at Cologne—How old Kaiser Wilhelm completed the cathedral—The most recent Kaiser and the ridiculous figure he cut on the occasion—What Moltke and Bismarck thought about him—A disagreeable adventure which might have had consequences—Von Moltke and the Wisdom of the Serpent—Bismarck drunk, but far from incapable.

**A**T school I learned the usual things the average boy gets into his head during the period of his penance, and then gets out of it as soon as schooldays are over, unless he goes to one of the Universities, a thing I did not do. I acquired the regulation indifferent knowledge of Latin, Greek, Geometry, and the other things which I did not at the time believe were likely to be of any subsequent service to me, and which I am now absolutely certain were of none. Had I devoted the same time and

study to French, Italian, Mental Arithmetic, and a dozen other matters of real value, I might have derived some benefit. Of course if a lad intends to become a doctor, a barrister, a Civil Servant, or a clergyman, dead languages are needful enough, but I was not destined for any of these callings, and much of what I was compelled to learn, with great suffering, physical as well as mental, proved to be not of the slightest use to me in after years.

One thing I did acquire, and I have always been glad of it. It was the special joy of our Headmaster to inflict punishment on such as deserved it by making them learn off so many dozen lines of Shakespeare.

As a result of considerable minor evil-doing, I know my Shakespeare fairly well, and am still capable, upon provocation, of repeating entire scenes from several of the best known plays.

I do not know that this knowledge is to be specially commended. It is true it enables you to correct your friends if by chance they are guilty of misquotations, but as such corrections are seldom received in really friendly spirit, and as it is still more seldom possible to induce the doubting misquoters to back their opinions with coin of the realm, there isn't much real advantage about this.

I have always thought that it would be a most valuable thing if older boys in their last term at

school, could be given a number of pointers upon general information. For instance, I would have them taught the difference between a bull and a bear on the Stock Exchange ; the correct amount which waiters ought to be tipped at the various restaurants, for of course there is an unwritten scale of such things ; how one ought to comport oneself on coming aboard a man-of-war ; what to do when one dines at a regimental mess for the first time ; how to play sundry games of cards, together with the terms and expressions connected therewith ; how to politely fend off the would-be borrower ; and the like, all matters which have to be subsequently learned in the battle of life, and the learning paid for at greater or lesser cost of coin and self-respect.

No doubt the time will arrive when in each school there will be at least one master whose special duty it will be to give his youthful charges really valuable tips upon many matters, and who knows but that we may yet come to find chairs endowed at the 'Varsities, with professors whose classes will be taught the exceedingly valuable matters of how to do, and how to avoid being done. It may come to pass ; you never can tell.

I was always an omnivorous reader, and even at a very youthful period had accumulated quite a large library in a small way. I don't know what papers the youth of to-day reads, but in my time there were many boys' weekly journals which



found tremendous favour in the sight of the multitude. Perhaps the most popular of these were *The Boys of England* and its companion paper *The Young Men of Great Britain*, though *The Sons of Britannia* and its allied journal *The Young Briton* ran them closely.

The tales contained in these journals were mainly about highwaymen of the most dashing, heroic, and chivalrous sort ; or of sailor heroes who experienced the most marvellous and thrilling adventures. Also there was usually a school story, wherein the boys did pretty well as they liked with their masters and everyone else, and those of us whose memories go back to *The Boys of England* and *The Sons of Britannia* will recollect the serial stories " Jack Harkaway's Schooldays " in the former, and " Tom Wildrake's Schooldays " in the latter.

It has, I know, been stated that Mr. Harcourt Burrage was the creator of " Dabber," the wooden legged seaman so full of strangely mangled verse, but certainly " Tom Wildrake's Schooldays," wherein Dabber figured, always purported to be work of the editor of the paper, Mr. George Emmett. As a matter of fact Dickens was no doubt the inspirer of the character, and those familiar with " Our Mutual Friend " and Silas Wegg who with his wooden leg was so prone to drop into poetry for the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, Mr. Venus, and others, will have no diffi-

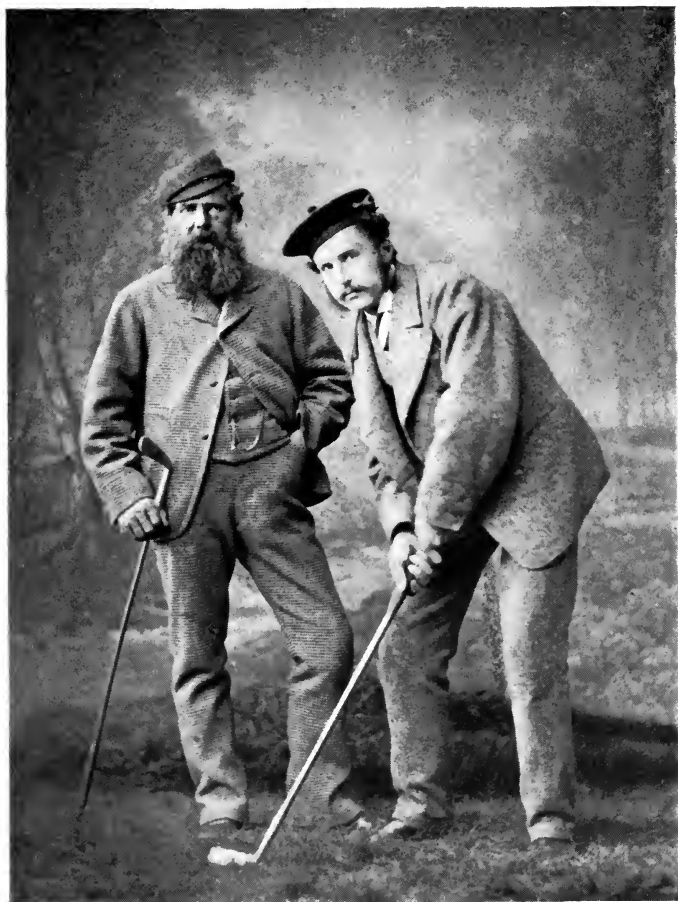
culty in tracing the family resemblance between the two characters.

"Tom Wildrake's Schooldays" was a remarkable story, and according to my recollection ran for several years, being followed in due course by "Young Tom's Schooldays" which was practically the same thing over again.

As for Jack Harkaway in *The Boys of England*, he was a prodigious fellow, the creation of Mr. Bracebridge Hemming, and lasted for many years in various forms. First there was "Jack Harkaway's Schooldays," then his "After Schooldays," "Jack Harkaway at Oxford," "Jack Harkaway's Adventures Round the World," and so on; and when Harkaway had done everything, and been sent everywhere by his author, "Young Jack Harkaway" came into being, and the thing started once more.

I don't suppose any papers ever endeared themselves to lads as did *The Sons of Britannia* and *The Boys of England*, and they must in their day have been possessed of huge circulations.

No less a light than immortal Robert Louis Stevenson has left it on record how much the latter paper was to him, and for my humble self I can truthfully say that on the night preceding the weekly arrival of *The Boys of England* from London, I hardly slept. One of my first pilgrimages when I came to Town as a lad, was to Fleet Street, for the express purpose of gazing in awe



*Photo.*

*Rodger, St. Andrews*

“OLD TOM” AND “YOUNG TOM” MORRIS, THE OLD TIME  
CHAMPION GOLFERS



at the dingy office from which this greatest of papers was published. It was something of pain and surprise to find the building one of lesser consequence than Buckingham Palace.

At the office of *The Boys of England* were to be purchased small toy theatres, and periodically there were issued sheets of characters and scenes of various plays such as "Alone in the Pirate's Lair," "Jack Cade the Rebel of London," and others of the same sort. These sheets you coloured for yourself, mounted on cardboard, and cut out, that is if you were a specially industrious and economical student of the drama.

If your soul abhorred drudgery, and your purse ran to it, you bought your characters and scenes "Coloured, cut out, and ready for use."

My theatre was my chiefest and dearest toy, and on its boards I produced many a play. My most noticeable successes as given before audiences composed of my parents, brethren, and such of the maid servants as could be induced to attend my performances were "Rifle Volunteers" and "The Waterman." I favoured these masterpieces chiefly by reason of the fact that each of them contained few characters, and was a work of comparatively easy manipulation. Some of my pieces were such stupendous productions, that they were never fully completed, and the curtain usually had to be lowered about half-way through.

A play of especially overwhelming proportions

was "The Miller and His Men," the production of which necessitated the use of hundreds of cardboard actors, and of scenes innumerable. "Douglas" also ran it close as a dramatic barrier not to be lightly overcome by the most skilful manipulator and producer.

There were trap-doors in the little stage, which were used with great effect, and at Christmas when of course like all well-conducted managers, I had to produce my pantomime, red and green fires were burnt with great effect.

Being an early devotee of chemistry, I used to make my own red and green fire powders. Sometimes they burnt brilliantly as intended, at other periods they either failed me ignominiously, like Zero's bombs in "The Dynamiter," or exploded with considerable violence and detestable odour.

On more than one occasion my soul for realism was rejoiced by the fact of my theatre catching fire. As this might have led to considerably extended conflagration, the grown-up portion of my audience used then to evince an unholy desire to extinguish my flames by whatever rough and ready means occurred to them. Such, however, was no way for a well-conducted theatre manager. I had my own little fire engine; with that and nothing else should the flames be fought. Sometimes I am forced to admit the fire engine proved not wholly equal to its task, and the results were unsatisfactory. Articles of furniture were burnt

and I myself suffered. This last I did gladly in the cause of Art, and on the particular occasion when I had to carry my arm in a sling as the result of a specially big conflagration, my pride was perhaps equalled, but certainly not surpassed, by that of, say Mr. Arthur Collins, on the occasion of a successfully concluded Boxing Night at Drury Lane.

When my schooldays came to an end, and I have never regretted their termination, my parents could not determine what they should make of me, and I being of a fairly even and philosophic temperament, did not mind much so long as my lines led to London. I wanted to get to the place which seemed like heaven on earth to me, as speedily as possible. However, that was not to be just yet. The son of some friends of my people was going to Germany for a year to learn the Huns' language, and generally finish off his education, and it was, after much discussion, decided that I should go along also. Before departing to the Fatherland, something happened which nearly rendered the idea of going there or anywhere else futile. I had gone over to Edinburgh from St. Andrews to see the pantomime, and in those days there was no Forth Bridge, the Frith being crossed in a small paddle steamer called the *John Sterling*. I was to have returned on Saturday from Edinburgh, but a great storm arose and the boat could not cross the Forth.

On Sunday morning the boat was still unable to cross, but on enquiry at Waverley Station in the afternoon of that day, I found that a train would leave Edinburgh for Granton in the evening, and that it was hoped a crossing to Burnt-island might be effected.

When we got to Granton the gale was still blowing great guns, but a number of the passengers had to get to Dundee that night in order to be in time for their work next morning, and so the brave little *John Sterling* duly set out on her distinctly perilous voyage across the Frith.

In an ordinary way the crossing should have taken three-quarters of an hour. That night it took two and a half hours, and at last, after considerable suffering, we got into harbour at Burnt-island, on the Fifeshire side of the Forth, and there the Dundee train was waiting.

I had to get out at a small junction station called Leuchars on my way to St. Andrews, the train then going to Dundee some twelve miles further on. It was well that I did get out there, for the train and its passengers never reached their destination. They got on to the big bridge crossing the Tay, and when in the middle of it, a specially strong gale blew the entire middle portion of the bridge down, and not a soul was saved from the terrible Tay Bridge disaster. The present Tay Bridge is, in spite of its great length and height, a very solid and safe creation with a



double set of rails. The old bridge which collapsed, was a much slighter matter and just the width of a single line of rails. The wonder is not that it fell down when it did, but that it stood up at all in the frequent gales sweeping down the Frith of Tay, which it had to face.

Later on behold me on my way to Hunland generally, and Düsseldorf on the Rhine in particular, partly to learn as far as possible the singularly brutal and hideous language of the country, which seems so wonderfully suited to those who speak it, and partly to acquire the polite art of painting in oil colours, for which I had shown a certain amount of skill as an amateur, with a possible view to adopting the calling of the painter as a means of livelihood.

I had won the open prize for drawing at my school and was accounted fairly ready with my brush, but the difference between the best amateur and the worst professional is tremendous, and I was by no means even in the best class of amateur artists. As a painter with any chance of making a living at the game, it was soon very clear to myself as well as to everyone else, that I had not the ghost of an idea. I was a moderately good amateur ; no more than that.

However, if I wasn't much good as a painter myself, some of those who were with me at Düsseldorf learning their trade, came to achieve considerable things. My old friend Caton Wood-

ville, the famous military painter, was just leaving for Paris, but among other promising students were Lockhart Bogle, and Dudley Hardy, whose clever work is familiar to everyone in these days.

I dwelt in the house of an eminent professor, one of the very few Germans I ever cared for, and two other English lads lived there at the same time.

It may interest people who can't quite understand the Huns' hatred of us to know that even in those days, on no single occasion can I recall walking in the streets of Düsseldorf without the passing school children and tradesmen's boys calling out "verdämter Engländer," which of course signifies "Damned Englishman." These boys are the men who fought against us in the Big War. They hated us when they were grown-up, but they hated us as far as they were capable—and had been taught to hate us in school and out of it—when they were children.

In Düsseldorf we lived the usual life of the art students, that is to say there was a certain amount of work, a vast deal of beer drinking, a smattering of duelling, I myself being exceedingly careful to be merely a spectator, a good deal of rough-and-tumble fun, and so on. I expect young men are pretty much the same all over the world, and fairly objectionable to those no longer of their own age and ways of thinking.

The most memorable day to me in Germany was that on which old Kaiser Wilhelm, grandfather of the most recent ruler, lowered the final stone, by means of a pulley somewhere, on to the roof of Cologne Cathedral in the Spring of 1881.

That was a great occasion, for most of the interesting people of Germany managed to crowd themselves into the singularly unfragrant city.

I started the day somewhat unfortunately, for I was at the time unable to speak the language, and my Professor who accompanied me desiring to send a telegram, told me to wait for him at the corner of a street near the post office. While I was doing so, a wretched child rushed out of a doorway and fell over my feet on to his face. The child's nose bled; some idiot called out that I had hit the little brute; a crowd collected and I was unable to explain matters at all. Then one whom I presumed to be an elder brother of the lad, shook his fist in my face and appeared to be threatening me with various things, so I hit him on the nose, causing that to bleed also, and then up came a policeman accompanied by the regulation sword, and I was being walked off, I presume, to the nearest police station, when my Professor happily arrived. I told him my story and the Professor, being of some consequence in Germany, soon straightened matters out, the policeman saluted, I took off my hat, and we parted quite pleased with one another.

I was fortunate enough to get a good place from which to watch the big procession to the cathedral, and it was very interesting to see the old Kaiser, the then Crown Prince Frederick, "Unzer Fritz," and behind them, walking in most ridiculous fashion, and doing all he could to attract attention, the latest Kaiser.

He was walking near Bismarck and Von Moltke and it was interesting to see how these two really great men regarded this strutting peacock, and then exchanged glances with one another.

My old companion said as the Arch-Hun passed amidst the half-shocked, half-amused glances of the onlookers, "It's all very well to smile at him, but there will be great trouble for us when that young man comes to the throne." One way and another there has been a good deal of it, not merely for his own countrymen but for the whole world as well.

The most memorable incident to me was quite a small one, but it was one where in a flash you got a sort of inkling of Bismarck's brutal nature.

As the big man walked along with great dignity, the really outstanding figure of the entire procession, he wore his characteristic frown, and it was impossible to help noticing the very heavy eyebrows. Just as he passed where we were, his foot caught on a stone and he stumbled slightly, his dignity was upset. In a moment the immense frowning eyebrows seemed to come down, not

merely over his eyes, but over his entire face, and when they lifted you saw an expression of absolutely bestial bad temper. You felt that if the road sweeper who had neglected to clear away that stone had been anywhere handy, his life wouldn't have been worth a second's purchase if Bismarck could have had the handling of him.

Moltke, who of course was the real brains of the Franco-Prussian War of '70 and '71, who walked near Bismarck, was a very curious looking old man with a dull red face lined with thousands of wrinkles. He was, or certainly looked as if he was, a perfectly hairless man, that is he had no eyelashes or eyebrows, and the fair hair he wore on the top of his withered old bald face was his only by right of purchase. He walked along looking very much like a singularly observant old owl, and if he did not say much, he seemed to think a great deal. There was precious little which went on for a hundred yards all round that very disagreeable old gentleman which he did not see!

In these days of great moderation in the use of alcohol, it is interesting to recall the fact that at least one Chancellor of a big European Power has, like many a lesser mortal, slept the sleep of the inebriated on the Embankment, and though it may shock Pro-Germans and others to know it, that singularly disagreeable and brutal old gentleman, Bismarck, on at least one occasion, found

the neighbourhood of Cleopatra's Needle a suitable place whereon to recover himself after certain too lengthy potations.

The story is an old one, is quite familiar to a few, and there is no reason why others should not read it now.

Everyone who knows his comparatively modern history, is aware that "THE MAN OF BLOOD AND IRON" was at times a stupendous toper, could put away more liquor than most, and was moreover exceedingly proud of his capabilities in this regard. Beer in the days which preceded the period when the Pilot was Dropped, was a matter of considerable moment to him, provided it appeared in sufficient quantity, and thus it was that during one of his visits to Queen Victoria, he caused himself to be taken over a well-known brewery in Town.

One of the possessions of this brewery was a glass of extraordinary amplitude, which held several pints of liquor. It was a great feat to be able to drink the contents right off without spilling a drop, not merely because of the quantity of liquid, but also because of the vast height of the glass which necessitated the possession of a specially long and strong arm.

Bismarck who had lunched with great heartiness prior to going the rounds of the brewery, was given various samples of beer to drink, including a little measure of a very special brew of ale, of

prodigious strength, meant of course to be drunk in quite small quantities.

Towards the end of the big man's visit, the famous large glass was exhibited to him, and on being told that only twice in the memory of man had anyone succeeded in emptying it at one draught without spilling a drop, he at once expressed a desire to become a third hero, expressly stipulating, however, somewhat to the alarm of his hosts, that the glass should be filled with the specially potent brew above alluded to.

The Hun Chancellor not only succeeded in getting rid of every drop of the liquor in the correct fashion, but to the amazement of the beholders, one of them the late member of the Cabinet who told me the story, requested that the glass might again be filled ; when he once more did the trick.

Then the visitors left the brewery to drive back to the Palace, but soon after the start Bismarck said to his special temporary monitor and guide, " I am droonk ! "

It being plain that he was as stated, it was considered desirable that Her Majesty's guest should be got back to the Palace as quickly as possible, and be put to bed for a time ; but Bismarck would have none of this. " Take me to the Embankment," he said, " and let me sit down and look at the river for two hours, and all will be well."

And so he was taken to the Embankment, the carriage being sent away and the coachman ordered to return in a couple of hours, and there Bismarck sat on one of the seats with his big soft felt hat pulled well over his features, while a couple of agonised courtiers kept watch and ward on him from the opposite side of the road.

At the end of two hours the carriage returned, the Hun Chancellor wakened from his reverie, got in with no assistance whatsoever, and was duly driven back to Buckingham Palace, and only some half-dozen people have ever been the wiser of the occurrence up till now.



## CHAPTER III

Arranging a career—A latter-day Dick Whittington—I go to London to become a civic millionaire—Failing the so doing, I drift into journalism—Life at Lloyd's—A resident in Pimlico—The dreadful significance of the name in those days—The Pimlico vestals—Sir Charles Cayzer and Sir John Muir—Where Cayzer threatened to send his "Clan" ships to—His reason for not carrying out his threat—A very conscientious interviewer—My meeting with John L. Sullivan—The champion of the world in training for his fight with Mitchell—How I stood up to "the big fellow" and how I most successfully took the knock—An article on Lloyd's in *The Bat* which made history at the time—Clerical friends in high places—A kindly bishop—An impressive experience—A guest in company with five bishops—How Bishop Thorold lost his spectacles at the Athenæum—Who stole them?—A dreadful supposition—How I became a regular contributor to *The Bat*—How its editor, James Davis, fled to France for safety's sake—How *The Hawk* came into being in its place.

**I**T having been decided with regard to my future, that it was wholly unlikely I should ever succeed in passing any sort of examination whatsoever, my good parents thought that perhaps the best thing for me would be to get into a business office of some sort or other, with a view to becoming, after a few years' toil, a commercial millionaire, and no doubt in due course Lord Mayor of the City of London.

I deemed it improbable that I should ever be

one or the other of these desirable things, but my excellent father, although a very able man at his own calling, was hopelessly innocent of all commercial knowledge, and had a sort of vague idea that the Dick Whittington Act was a quite common occurrence even in these times.

For myself I did not much mind what happened so long as I got to London, which had always appeared to me the most desirable place in this world wherein to abide, and so it was I was taken to see our late local Member of Parliament, Mr. Stephen Williamson, a wealthy Liverpool business man, with considerable influence in the City of London, and his assistance was duly invoked on my behalf.

In a short time word arrived from Mr. Williamson in London, that he had secured an opening for me in the office of one of the best known firms of East India Merchants in the City.

Of the seven deadly years I went through in that firm's service, I prefer to write but little. I can truthfully say that I cordially detested every hour of my office life during that time. The work was hard and tedious to a degree. The prospects were simply non-existent to a man unrelated to one of the several partners, and the salary paid me, even at the end of seven years of very hard, and, according to the testimonials I received, quite satisfactory work, was simply ludicrous, and such as I never dreamt of offering even to junior clerks

when I subsequently came to employ such in my own office.

The fact is the assistants of the firm in question were largely drawn from the sons of people with whom the firm had business relations, who came into our place to learn the ropes, and naturally enough didn't care what sort of salaries they were paid. Of course there were some elderly regular clerks too, but they were content with very little, and whether they were content or otherwise didn't matter. In my own case it cost my parents a considerable allowance in order that I might be privileged to perform extensive and important duties for the firm which was a very Scotch one in the worst sense of the term, and gave uncommonly little away.

Being ignorant of many matters and of none more so than the reputation of certain localities in London, when I came to Town I took rooms in Alderney Street, Pimlico.

In these days the word Pimlico conveys very little. In the early eighties it stood for a good deal, and its reputation was such that the name was seldom used in polite society, those who abode in or near it preferring to say that they dwelt in "South Belgravia."

Briefly, Pimlico, like St. John's Wood, was the special province of the hundreds of ladies of the "oldest profession," and it was difficult in those days to light upon a house in Alderney Street,

Winchester Street, Cumberland Street, and the rest, which was not to be described as "gay." By sheer good fortune my camping ground was quite correct, and my landlady a most well conducted and worthy soul. Nowadays Pimlico is, I believe, all it ought to be, and to have been, but when I first knew it—well it wasn't. Let it go at that !

I shall never forget how in the very early days of my life in London, while paying a call on some friends of my people, I was asked by my hostess whereabouts I was living, and in all innocence responded promptly and perhaps rather loudly "At Alderney Street, Pimlico." The drawing-room was full of people, all busily talking, but my magical address reduced them for several seconds to the stoniest of silences. Women blushed slightly and looked at their boots, men scowled at me, and one sportsman, thinking himself out of range of all but myself, made vigorous signs expressive of the fact that I had committed a very special bloomer.

Of course I knew at once I had said something or other which I ought not to have done, but it was only later on, when I had an opportunity of consulting one of the sons of the house, that I discovered that the name of my abiding locality was like that of the Clan MacGregor, a forbidden one.

However, when I came to know Pimlico quite

well, and a good deal concerning its inhabitants, I stayed on there. It was not expensive and being near Victoria it was very central for nearly everywhere, and this I may say, that no matter how rowdy the fair inhabitants of the quarter may have been elsewhere, they behaved with all possible propriety in their own streets, and one saw little of them excepting late at night, when of course one ought to have been in bed, when they returned from their evening constitutionals about the Haymarket and Waterloo Place, in hansoms, literally by the hundred.

It was soon clear to me that office work was not the job that my soul hankered after, for its deadly monotony was terrible, although there were little episodes one recalls which were not wholly devoid of humour. There was, for instance, the occasion—it has become historical—when the late Sir John Muir, then head of our firm, who was a very important person in the East Indian Commercial world, as well as Lord Provost of Glasgow, had a somewhat heated argument with another personage of consequence, Sir Charles Cayzer, chief of the “Clan” line. Muir was a very tall man, while Cayzer—the father-in-law, by the way, of Lord Jellicoe—was quite small in all respects, save in that of his enormously large head.

A dispute had arisen concerning the destination of certain of the “Clan” boats, when little Cayzer, standing on his tiptoes so that he might the more

readily reach the ears of the tall Muir, gave vent to these memorable words, which are, I am sure, still recalled in City shipping circles, " John Muir, I will send my ships where I like. I would send them to hell if it wasn't that I know you have an agent there already ! "

About this period I had begun to write a bit for various papers, hoping that the time might come when I should have enough of that sort of work, which I liked, to make it good enough to get out of the City, which I loathed. As is the case with most newcomers to journalism, the way was uncommonly hard. I wrote an immense deal for journals which, when, and if they paid at all, paid very little. I fancy, too, I must in my simplicity have done as much work for bogus proprietors who never paid a farthing and never meant to, as most writers I have come in contact and compared notes with.

After a time as a free-lance I managed to secure one or two regular, if ill-paid, jobs. Thus I wrote for two or three years a weekly article of two columns, for a provincial paper called the *South Glasgow Gazette*—I don't know if it still exists to-day—for 7s. 6d. ; a weekly interview with a topical celebrity of three columns for a deceased weekly called *The Society Times*, published in Wardour Street, for a like sum, and three columns of dramatic notes for another weekly for 5s.

The theatrical article I liked, chiefly because by



*Photo.*

NELLIE FARREN

*Dorothy*





its means I gained free admission to the theatres and music-halls, and the interviewing business I also was keen about, because of the interesting people it brought me in contact with.

And in this connection one of my most interesting subjects was the late John L. Sullivan, probably the greatest "hurricane" fighter who ever lived. Sullivan was for many years champion of the world, and it was when he came to this country, and was in training for his celebrated bare-knuckle fight with the late Charles Mitchell that I tackled him on a memorable Sunday at his training quarters in Windsor. Sullivan was doing his training from a hotel therein, the Royal Adelaide. Its landlord was the somewhat notorious Harry Bull, better known in racing circles as Chippy Norton the bookmaker, and my visit to Sullivan was paid just five days before he met Mitchell in France, to fight for the championship of the world, with what are known as the raw 'uns, which signifies with gloveless fists.

The big man who was always in those days pretty much of a brute, was as most men are when in hard training, in anything but good temper. However, he agreed to see me, and as the Press of the world was at that time full of the forthcoming combat, the interview looked like being a valuable scoop for my paper.

I duly saw Sullivan, went through part of his training with him, asked as many questions as I

dared and as his trainer would allow, and no doubt made myself as much of a nuisance as possible.

When we got back to the hotel after a hard walk, Sullivan arrayed in a vast number of sweaters, and he was being rubbed down by his small army of camp followers, Chippy Norton asked me if there was anything further I wanted to know before the hero went to rest for a bit.

It was then that by evil fortune I sought to enquire as to the slight injury to his right arm which Sullivan had come by in America, shortly before sailing for England.

He explained briefly and forcibly that he had struck his arm against the head of his sparring partner.

If I had been a more experienced and less conscientious journalist, I would have let it go at that. But I again asked to have the matter more clearly explained to me, being desirous of having my facts quite accurate.

"Well, you see, I hit him like that," said Sullivan, "and he raised his head like this, and my arm got across him so. Now do you understand?" And I was ass enough to say I did not. "Well," he said, "put up your hands and I will show you." And madness having clearly come upon me I did so.

Of course I know it was a silly thing to have done, but at the time it never occurred to me that Big John L. Sullivan, in hard training for

the championship of the world, would hit a lad who obviously knew little or nothing of the game, but the moment I raised my hands I became aware by the smiles I saw out of the corner of my eye, on the faces of those present, and by the gleam which came in the big fighter's optics, that I was going to get at least one smack. Naturally I was not idiot enough to dream of hitting Sullivan, my intention being simply to get out of the way of the light blow which might be coming, drop my hands at once, and say that I now clearly understood how the mishap had occurred ; moreover, there was of course the fact that I should be standing up to John L. Sullivan with bare knuckles, a thing which up till then no Englishman had ever ventured to do. That counted for something !

But while I was thinking of the matter I got my blow right enough, and it was no light one either, for I was struck in the centre of the forehead so quickly that I hardly saw the blow coming, and so hard that it lifted me right off my feet on to a sofa some little way behind, and there I sat for a minute or two wondering if an earthquake had happened, or if I had merely been struck by lightning. It was not like a blow from a human fist at all. It seemed exactly as if a big blacksmith had hit me on the forehead with his forehammer, and the next thing I recollect was Chippy Norton holding a stiff glass of brandy to

my lips and asking how I felt now. I said I hoped I should feel all right in a week or two, and seeing that I wasn't making a song of the matter, Sullivan shook me warmly by the hand and said :

" Well, say, anyhow no other Britisher ever stood up like that to John L. Sullivan."

" Very likely," I said, " and if I hadn't been a blanked idiot I wouldn't have done it either."

Now it is something of a coincidence that a few days after the big fight had taken place, I had a chat with Mitchell about it, and he was describing how one particular round had been fought, and to make things clear to me said as Sullivan had said before him, " Put up your hands and I will show you." But this time I thought *not*; and I told Mitchell that I had already done this to his adversary and that it was to him I owed the large bruise on my forehead which was still well to the fore. " Well," said Mitchell, " at all events

- you and I are the only people in this country who ever stood up to John with the raw 'uns." And this is a fact although the duration of my up-standing was just about the hundredth part of a second.

It was while I was in the City, and one of the representatives of my firm on Lloyd's, the big insurance place, at the Royal Exchange, that I wrote an article in the deceased *Bat* which made a deal of talk at the time. It was called " A Luncheon at Lloyd's," and brought in most of the

best known men in “ the room ” under thinly disguised aliases. I worked in all the little bits of gossip and personality that I knew about the members, and as a result, when that week's issue of *The Bat* was published, the demand for copies in the city generally and on Lloyd's in particular was remarkable. The paper went out of print that week. Some of the members smiled ; others did not, and it might have been disagreeable for me if they had known who the author of the amusing if mischievous article was. I, however, was not desirous of acquiring fame and so kept my knowledge to myself, listening with interest to the comments of those who figured in the literary effort, and to the direful threats of vengeance promised the unknown writer if his identity could be discovered. Perhaps some of those who can recall the occurrence will accept my belated apologies now, for as Michael Finsbury in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Wrong Box* says, there is “ nothing like a little judicious levity,” and I meant no real harm.

Among those who were especially kind to me during my early days in London none was more so than Bishop Thorold of Rochester, an old friend of my father, and I was frequently fortunate enough to be invited to stay at Selsdon Park near Croydon, which was at that time the Palace of the See of Rochester.

In the home of that kindest of men, who was a

widower, I was privileged to meet many dignitaries of the Church, and on one occasion—I think of it still with awe—I stayed there when all the other guests, five in number, were Bishops. The only man at table not a Bishop was Dr. Thorold's Chaplain. Thus I was the only layman there, and felt myself in very good and decidedly exalted company. It was a memorable experience for a young man, and I am not likely to forget it, and the many intensely interesting things I heard the Prelates discuss.

Bishop Thorold of Rochester and anon of Winchester, was one of Gladstone's Bishops, and on one occasion he returned to Selsdon after spending the day in Town in considerable distress. He had lost his spectacles, they were old friends, and he felt their going keenly. "I can't think how it happened," said he. "I had them with me when I went into the reading-room of the Athenæum, and I only laid them down for a second or two while I searched my pockets to find a letter I wanted to answer. When I looked for them they were gone!"

Then the good Bishop was asked who were in the room at the time, as well as himself. "That's the dreadful part of the story," he said, "for there were only present the Bishop of London, the Bishop of St. David's, the Archdeacon of Rochester, and Mr. Gladstone!" Who actually, by accident or intention, collected the glasses, history does not

state, but it is a fact that their legal owner never cast eyes upon them again.

It may or may not have been at Selsdon too that a rather young footman entered on his duties the day that Dr. Claughton, Bishop of St. Albans, came to stay there, and it was explained to the well meaning but rather stupid lad, that when he took up the Bishop's shaving water next morning, he was to knock at the bedroom door. The Bishop it was believed would say "Who is there?" And the instructions were that the young footman was to reply "The boy, my lord."

On the morning, the lad duly knocked at the Bishop's door, and the Prelate of St. Albans spoke his part according to the book, and called out "Who is there?" whereupon the over anxious footman responded in a voice somewhat shaken by nervousness, "The Lord, my boy!" which, as Bishop Thorold in subsequently retailing the story said, was "a very alarming statement!"

I have told of my first article in *The Bat* which made a certain amount of talk, chiefly of a vengeful nature, and it appealed so much to the editor, the late James Davis, better known perhaps as "Owen Hall," the name under which he wrote *A Gaiety Girl*, *The Geisha*, *An Artist's Model*, and other triumphant successes produced at Daly's Theatre by George Edwardes, that he asked me to call and see him, and invited me to write regu-

larly for his paper, which was a sixpenny weekly with a fairly big circulation.

*The Bat* was usually amusing, always more or less enterprising, and as a rule decidedly clever, so I was quite pleased that Davis should have thought my work good enough for his columns, and I did quite a lot of writing for him. Jimmy Davis simply could not keep out of libel actions, and one of these resulted in his going to prison, the paper being carried on in his absence by the late Alec Knowles, who was well known on the *Evening News*, *The Sporting Times*, and elsewhere, over his signature "Sir Affable."

One article I sent to *The Bat* called "Cambridge Conned" appeared, to my considerable surprise, in a new paper resembling *The Bat* in shape and all particulars, other than the title, for it was called *The Hawk*.

With the copy of the paper came a letter from Mr. Augustus Moore informing me that *The Bat* had ceased to be, that *The Hawk* had taken its place under his editorship, and that he hoped I would continue to contribute to the paper under its new title. Later on I ascertained that Davis, being aware an action for criminal libel was about to be brought against him, and being of opinion that he did not desire to return to Holloway Prison, had bolted to Boulogne, and there he stayed for several years till the well-known peer who had brought the action, forgave him, agreed



to withdraw the summons, and permitted him to return to London.

It was after this that Jimmy, having decided his pen was too dangerous a weapon for himself, when engaged in newspaper work, turned his attention to Musical Comedy writing, with very great success indeed. He was a clever fellow and a most amusing one as well, and although he was a kindly natured man, his writing could be of a very bitter sort. Later on he became an occasional contributor to a journal I edited, but though his work was always good, it was also usually dangerous, and one had to read every word of it very carefully, with the largest of blue pencils close at hand. Jimmy Davis came of a family of clever writers, for one of his sisters is Mrs. Aria, and another was the famous novelist who wrote under the name of "Frank Danby," whose son Mr. Gilbert Frankau is rapidly following in his distinguished mother's literary footsteps.

## CHAPTER IV

Free of the city—How I gradually drifted into journalism—Small happenings and how they affect one's career—I purchase *The Hawk* on behalf of a brewer—Augustus Moore as editor—How the brewer and his partner made £12,000 out of a £325 investment—How I became "registered proprietor" of the paper—Also writ-receiver in chief—A paper of many libels—Alec Knowles and his "Wrinkles"—A remarkable series of articles—Why they were not republished in book form—The staff of *The Hawk*—Some men who got on—The Whistler-Moore fracas at Drury Lane—How they slapped one another to the amusement of onlookers, and did little harm—How Charlie Mitchell, champion boxer of England, told me a funny story "not for publication"—How it found its way into *The Hawk* by way of Augustus Moore—How Mitchell and Pony Moore subsequently called at the office to have a heart-to-heart talk with us—The consternation of the editor on hearing of their visit—How I decided to leave *The Hawk* and start *The Pelican*—A wise move which proved a highly satisfactory one in after years.

TOWARDS the latter end of my seven long years in the City, I had come to have so many regular journalistic jobs that my life had become one of considerable slavery. So much had to be written each week, that after my day's work in the City I had to tackle my scribbling, and keep on at it till all sorts of hours next morning. Sunday instead of being a day of rest had become one of additional toil, and one way and another the



*Photo.*

FRED LESLIE

*Portrait*



game did not seem good enough, so I decided to take my courage in both hands and let the City take care of itself without further interference from me, devoting myself entirely to such writing jobs as I had already got, or might further obtain.

Just about this time, too, Fate sent me a regular engagement in a newspaper office, which quite decided my course of action.

It is curious how a very small matter may affect one's subsequent career, and it was through a casual visit to the Old Globe Theatre one evening, to see a new first piece, that I first met Mr. W. Morley Pegge.

Mr. Pegge had at that time but recently married Miss Florence Sutherland, a member of Mr. Edward Terry's theatrical company, and I had had the privilege of meeting her some time before. It was she who made me known to her husband, and after the theatre, the Pegges invited me to supper at their flat in Victoria Street, and it was then and there Mr. Pegge explained to me that his chief reason for desiring my acquaintance was not so much on account of my plain looks or pretty ways, as because he wanted to find out certain facts about *The Hawk*, the sixpenny weekly paper to which I have already alluded, and he believed I could give him the information he desired.

Briefly, Mr. Pegge wanted to become a newspaper proprietor, and thought he saw a chance of

turning several honest pennies in the accomplishment of his scheme. If there was one thing Mr. Morley Pegge understood better than another it was the polite art of making a bargain with as little trouble to himself as possible.

Mr. Pegge had been a brewer, and had recently had a good deal to do with the conversion of J. Nunnerley and Co. of Burton-on-Trent.

He wanted to know if *The Hawk* could be purchased from its then proprietor, Mr. John Gretton, a barrister, who later on came to be intimately associated with Colonel North, the Nitrate King. I knew that Mr. Gretton was most desirous of getting rid of his property, which was at that time being edited by Alec Knowles, Augustus Moore, the previous editor, having had his services dispensed with.

Pegge believed that Moore, a brother, by the way, of Mr. George Moore the novelist and dog champion, was the right man to run *The Hawk* and invited my opinion as to this. I agreed that he was. Would I tackle Gretton, find out what he wanted for his property, secure Moore's services as editor, become manager, sub-editor, and registered proprietor myself, at a certain salary? I would, and I did.

The first number of *The Hawk* had been published on February 7th, 1888, and it was in the autumn of that year that I began my negotiations with Gretton, and after much discussion, for there

were many complications, and sundry libel actions pending against the paper, I purchased *The Hawk* on behalf of Pegge for the exceedingly small sum of £325, clear proof that its owner was reasonably glad to be rid of his property. I had previously secured the services of Moore, whom I found intensely willing and desirous of returning to his old job, and almost painfully full of thanks and apparent gratitude to me for helping him to do so.

Various amounts have been stated in print as the sum paid for *The Hawk* on that occasion. The above is the correct one, and I ought to know for I signed the cheque myself on the National Provincial Bank, Lincoln's Inn. Mr. Pegge's remarkable financial luck stuck to him in his newspaper investment. The paper began to pay almost at once, chiefly by reason of the extraordinary boom in Prospectus advertisements which occurred about this time and lasted for several years afterwards, to the great glory and satisfaction of quite a number of hitherto struggling journals. Week after week *The Hawk* used to come out with eight or ten pages of prospectuses all paid for at full scale rates, and Moore, who was in his way an undoubtedly clever man, and next to Jimmy Davis just the right editor for a newspaper of the kind, did his portion of the business very well.

A series of articles of quite remarkable ability and versatility which did a lot for the paper,

called "Wrinkles, being a series of letters from Sir Affable Hawke to his nephew Tommy Hawke on starting his career in London," attracted a lot of attention. They were written with real "inside" knowledge, and dealt with all sorts of subjects, people, and phases of life, as it was then lived in Town. They were very cynical, very worldly, full of information of a marvellously versatile sort, and were really clever. Moore was supposed to have written them all. As a matter of fact he wrote three or at the most four, the majority of them being written from his own information, or "from information received" as the police witnesses say, by Alec Knowles, who for many years afterwards used to sign his contributions to various papers "Sir Affable."

The "Wrinkles" were so good and so popular that in response to numerous suggestions from the public, Morley Pegge considered the republishing of them in book form. On consultation with Moore, that gentleman agreed the idea would be a good one, provided his name appeared on the title page as their author! Naturally Knowles would not hear of this and the scheme fell through. Moore certainly had a deal to do with the success of *The Hawk* at one time, but he was not its entire source of triumph by a very long way.

The clever paragraphs at the start of the paper were always a strong feature of *The Hawk's* contents. They usually contained real news,



were genuinely clever and amusing, except to the persons written about, and were sometimes libellous. My old friend Mr. James Glover of Drury Lane celebrity was one of the most prolific writers on *The Hawk* and was responsible for most of the theatrical notes. In those days friend James was a tall, rather thin, hatchety faced young man, very different in outward seeming from what he is to-day. Others who wrote more or less regularly for the paper were Francis Gribble the well-known author, who had so disagreeable an experience at the hands of the Huns in Ruhleben, Justin Huntley McCarthy who had not then married Miss Cissie Loftus, Clement Scott, the famous dramatic critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, James Runciman (John A'Dreams), Bernard Shaw, Charlie Williams the War Correspondent, George Moore the novelist, A. B. Walkley, at that time dramatic critic of the *Star*, and now employed in similar capacity on *The Times*, Robert Hichens, Frederick Greenwood, Henry Murray, brother of the famous Christie, Herbert Collinson, and several others.

That Mr. Pegge did not do badly, financially, with *The Hawk* may be taken from the fact that some six months after he had had the paper purchased for him for £325, he sold half a share of it to Mr. Frank Harris at that time editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, for £3,500. Later on Pegge and Harris sold their property to a syndicate, in which were Clement Scott and George Edwardes

among others, for £12,000. At least that was the sum reported. I fancy it was not all in cash however. Still the sellers did uncommonly well out of their bargain, for even at that time the paper had passed the high-water mark of its financial success, and soon after began to decline slowly and surely owing to a variety of circumstances.

It was Whistler the artist who first wrote of "The Polite Art of Making Enemies," and certainly Augustus Moore possessed the faculty of so doing to an extraordinary degree. He was not a particularly unkind man in himself, but his fatal faculty of saying cruel and needless things in his paper, and of persistently making enemies, stood in the way of his success, and when things went somewhat awry with him, and when *The Hawk* was secured by a new proprietorate which had no use for his services, and when help generally would have been very welcome, it was just not given.

As "Registered Proprietor" of *The Hawk* it was my privilege to receive the writs for libel, and these were ludicrously frequent of arrival, for Moore's recklessness, both of writing and editing, led to lots of employment for the "professional quarrellers." Of course these libel actions, actually mattered very little to me, for on receipt of the writs I merely sent them on to George Lewis, the solicitor who acted for the paper, and notified

Pegge, who did most of the worrying, and had the fun of paying the lawyer's very considerable charges.

Moore and I worked in one room at a couple of tables, and though I have no desire to say anything unkind of a dead man, I cannot help recording the fact that we had no specially brotherly love for one another. I don't know which of us was to blame. Perhaps both.

One of the few things recollected about Moore to-day is, no doubt, the diminutive combat which took place between him and Whistler, the celebrated artist, in the *foyer* of Drury Lane Theatre. Moore did not knock Whistler down as he stated in print, on several subsequent occasions. What happened was that after hitting Moore once or twice with the small cane he carried, Whistler made a specially energetic cut, missed his man, tripped over the foot of Charles Brookfield, who accompanied him, and fell.

I was the only person present as an onlooker at the start of the proceedings, and saw the entire entertainment from beginning to end, and according to a fairly vivid recollection neither man looked much of a hero, and there seemed to be a good deal of let-me-get-at-him-hold-me-back about the pair of them. Whistler was very red and excited, Moore was ghastly pale and looked as if he were going to faint. However, the old enemies are gone now: peace be to them both.

Moore, who fancied himself as a boxer, although I for one never saw the slightest evidence of his ability in this regard, nearly had a chance of giving an exhibition of his qualities at *The Hawk* office one day, but discretion proved the better part of valour all round, and nothing happened.

What occurred was this. Meeting the late Charles Mitchell, at the time champion boxer of England, late one evening, that hero regaled me with an account of an escapade which he had taken part in. There is no occasion to recount his story here. Let it suffice to say that it was a rather brutal, but at the same time, amusing story, and as he told it to me, Mitchell said, "Remember this is in confidence, and not for the paper."

In an evil moment I repeated the story to Moore the next day, the day, by the way, on which *The Hawk* went to press. I explained that the story had been told me in confidence and was not for publication, and I understood him to give me his word that he quite realised the position of matters.

Considerably to my surprise, when I looked at the contents of *The Hawk* the following morning, there was the Mitchell story told at great length, and considerably embellished with a number of disagreeable comments about the pugilist.

In those days, Mitchell was a man of somewhat hasty temper, and so I foresaw trouble ahead. Of course he would believe that I had broken my

word, and about this I naturally felt very uncomfortable.

I became no happier shortly after my arrival at *The Hawk* office, when a clerk appeared and in a very agitated manner told me that two gentlemen desired to see me, "but," he added, "if I were you, sir, I wouldn't see them. They seem very angry." "Did you ask their names," I said. "Oh yes," he replied, "they are Mr. Charlie Mitchell and Mr. 'Pony' Moore."

Now the idea of seeing these two pleasant, but at the time irate visitors, without a witness of our meeting, pleased me not at all. I did not mind anything that might be coming to me if I had someone else to look on, and so knowing that Moore would probably turn up at about half-past twelve, I told the clerk to say I was out, but would be back, and glad to receive my visitors at one o'clock.

When Moore arrived, I told him as directly as I could, what I thought of his action in failing to keep faith with me, but he could not see that he had done anything out of the common. "After all, what does it matter?" he said. "It was too good a story to miss. Mitchell won't see it, and even if he does he won't dare to come here." "Won't he?" said I. "Well, it may interest you to know that he has been here already with his father-in-law, Pony Moore, and they are coming back at one o'clock." "Are they, by Jove," said

Moore, " then I'm off. I'm not going to stop here and have a row with those people. Outside is good enough for me. You had better clear too."

I said I would do nothing of the kind, and that now I had made things plain to him, I would stop and meet Mitchell and Moore when they came, tell them the exact facts of the matter, and take my chance of whatever was going to happen.

I waited on till two o'clock but no one turned up. Later on I heard that the festive pair had gone to Romano's after their first call, and had stayed there for some time, and no doubt the soothing influences of the Roman's very old brandy had made them think of better things than of returning to lay me out.

It was several years afterwards before I had a chance of explaining matters to Mitchell, and as he said it was just as well they had not come back, for no matter what he himself might have done or left undone, "Pony" would certainly have had my gore. I don't know if Moore afterwards encountered Mitchell. If he did, he didn't brag about it to me, or so far as I know to any one else.

One way and another there was a deal of liveliness in being attached to *The Hawk*; rather more than I cared for, in fact. I did not mind making such enemies as I required for myself, but I did object to having them made for me at the rate of some six or eight a week.

It was also becoming clear to me that there was precious little money to be made by writing for someone else's paper, and it might be more profitable, and certainly more interesting, to possess a journal of one's own. Thus I made my plans for starting *The Pelican*, and when I had got these all cut and dried I resigned my position on *The Hawk* and cleared out with the liveliest satisfaction to myself, and I doubt not to that of my editor as well.

## CHAPTER V

Starting on my own account—The creation of *The Pelican*—How *The Tattler*—with two t's—did not help matters—A scheme which failed—The first money taken—Where it disappeared to—How the paper came by its title—Serving on a jury—If likely to be convicted, be careful in the selection of your judge!—The finish of *The Hawk* and the success of *The Pelican*—The death of "The Smart Paper for Smart People"—Wise advice from George R. Sims—"Dagonet" on the folly of making enemies—How *The Sporting Times* and *The Pelican* nearly became amalgamated—"Tale-Pitcher" Binstead—A real humorist—"The Dwarf of Blood"—How Colonel Newnham-Davis came by his style and title—Bessie Bellwood's pantomime—The "Dwarf" as a cookery genius—His famous Guy Fawkes dinner, and those who were present at it—A born story-teller—A very distinguished admirer of "Pitcher"—How he was mistaken for a German spy—His singularly apt retort.

**I** SUPPOSE that almost every journalist, at some time or other, desires to own and edit a paper, just as every actor wants to be a manager, and give himself the sort of parts he believes he is best suited to; and so it was not out of the common that I should have decided that the way to a sufficiency of "the root of all evil," to keep me when the time came when I should tire of work, was to create something for myself.

Being a contributor to journals was well enough in its way, and I had been reasonably fortunate.



Sub-editing was all right too, but what I wanted was to be Commanding Officer of my own ship, and I desired, moreover, to know that at least a portion of whatever my work was producing was actually going to come my way.

And so I started *The Pelican*, and on November 2nd, 1889, the first number thereof was born at 84 Fleet Street, with *Punch* as a next-door neighbour.

I started with no preliminary advertisement or heralding, principally because I couldn't afford the former very costly matter, but, all the same, the little paper, apparently, filled the regulation "long-felt want," alluded to by most new periodicals, for it was a success from its first issue.

In subsequent years, every now and again, a specially eagle-eyed correspondent used to write and point out that though he or she had acquired a copy of the first number, they were greatly puzzled to find it stated thereon that it was "No. 115, Vol. 5." The reason was a very simple one, and was thuswise.

In those days it was—and perhaps still is—a matter of difficulty to get a new paper on to the bookstalls at its start, for the newsagents said, rightly enough, "Wait till the public ask for it, and we will take it; but not till then."

Wherefore I thought of a plan to get on to the stalls, especially the railway bookstalls, right away. I purchased for a small sum, a paper

which was dying, but which possessed the advantage of a place in the bookstall sun. It was a penny paper with an orange coloured cover, like the familiar *Pelican* contents' bills, and it was called *The Tattler*, spelt, you will notice, with two t's, unlike friend Clement Shorter's well-known weekly. I produced one number of *The Tattler*, and stated in large letters on the wrapper thereof, that the title of the paper would be changed to *The Pelican*, the cover would become brown—I copied this idea from the old *Bat*—and numerous other alterations and improvements would be made; and thus I hoped all was going to be well, and when W. H. Smith and Son, Willing, and the other big wholesale agents, sent in their orders the following week for *Tattlers*, they were given *Pelicans* instead.

But the scheme was a ghastly failure. The newspaper distributing magnates would have none of us. They returned their *Pelicans* and said they had not ordered them, and so the money spent on the purchase of *The Tattler* went for nothing. That was my first smack in the eye in connection with my new venture. I got a good many of these one way and another; as I no doubt deserved.

However, although the newsagents wouldn't have us on the morning of our birth, the public having got to hear about us, somehow or other, and having started to ask at the bookstalls con-

cerning our whereabouts, the agents sent in orders during the afternoon of the same day, and *The Pelican* duly found itself displayed among the other journals on the railway station and other bookstalls, and so all was well, honour was satisfied, I and a cousin-partner shook hands with one another, and said, "Well, hang it all, at any rate we have started."

It was a curious omen, and one which I did not regard favourably at the time, to find from our publisher that the first money actually taken over the publishing office counter was a bad two-shilling piece. My dear old friend, Arthur Binstead, famous all the world over as "Pitcher" of *The Sporting Times*, and as the first editor of *Town Topics* would have it that great good luck was clearly heralded by the advent of the spurious coin. "Pitcher" was one of the most really humorous writers I ever knew. He was an actual genius in his way, and singularly superstitious, although he always believed he wasn't.

The base coin was duly nailed to the counter as a warning to all future would-be evil-doers that we had already had some. Sometime after it was found to be gone. Someone had stolen it; and I devoutly trust he subsequently got locked up for attempting to pass it, as he no doubt tried to do.

And talking of this sort of thing recalls how the sentences awarded to criminals so often vary

mysteriously in degree according to the judge who tries the cases.

Thus, not very long ago, I was a juryman at the Central Criminal Court, when a case which came before my jury-brethren and myself, was that of a hero who had defrauded a considerable number of persons of very large sums. We found him guilty, and he received a sentence of three months' imprisonment from a very lenient judge.

Later on the same day I again juried, when an unfortunate lad was tried for passing a bogus ten shilling Money Order. This time Mr. Justice Avory, the judge who tried the case, considered that justice would not be arrived at with a smaller sentence than fifteen months; and this he duly awarded the luckless young fellow, luckless, chiefly, according to my way of looking at matters, that his case came before the latter, instead of the former judge.

But to return to our mutton. Many people have asked why the journal was called *The Pelican*, and the reason was thuswise. The paper purported to be one for men-about-Town, and all the young men at that time were members of the famous Pelican Club, and when we were casting about for a suitable name for our new paper it was suggested that *The Pelican* would be a good and expressive title. Another name cropped up and was thought a good deal of, and so a week before the paper was published, we tossed up which



*Photo.*

*Downey*

KATE VAUGHAN



of the two names it should have, and by reason of having a crown, produced for the purpose, by the way, by the late Duke of Manchester, then more familiar to many as Kim Mandeville, falling tail upwards, the paper was duly christened *The Pelican*.

I fear the beginning of *The Pelican* was also the ending of *The Hawk*, for people found they could get pretty much the same sort of news in *The Pelican* for a penny, that they got in *The Hawk* for six times that sum. Anyhow after going down hill, more or less unsteadily, for some years, *The Hawk*, which among other things had prophesied three months of life for its smaller rival, ceased to be and died the death.

I don't think its end was regretted by many, for during its time on earth the paper had managed to make quite a remarkable number of enemies, who openly rejoiced at its downfall. It called itself "A Smart Paper for Smart People," and assuredly it used to make a lot of people smart each week. Of course it amused some persons to see their best friends attacked or held up to ridicule, and perhaps the so doing sold a few extra copies, but by the following week, the attacks were all forgotten—except by the persons attacked.

They remembered them, naturally, and when the chance came of getting a bit of their own back, they took it with great promptitude and

satisfaction, and with at least equally disastrous results to the paper.

Having seen the suicidal folly of making enemies, and of having them made for me, during my connection with *The Hawk*, I made up such mind as I possessed that the policy of *The Pelican* should be to be fairly smart and spicy—hateful words, but I know of none better to explain my present meaning—and at the same time though not being too indefinite, to make as few enemies as possible, and as many friends as I could.

Any ass with a paper, or perhaps without one, can make enemies ; that I am convinced of, for it is simplicity itself to be rude to people, whether you are an editor, or the follower of any other trade. On the other hand, it is difficult to make friends and to keep them, and if there is one thing I am more glad of than another, in my over twenty-eight years' connection with *The Pelican*, it is, that while I believe I made very few enemies, I know I made many kind, loyal, and valuable friends, for the paper and for myself.

I remember well in this connection how my good friend, George R. Sims, the world famous " Dagonet " of *The Referee*, early in *The Pelican's* career took me into a corner of the big room of the old Eccentric Club one night, and gave me a most valuable talking to.

Said he, among much other kindly and greatly valued advice, " Don't make more enemies than



you can help ; you can easily make them and they will never do you any good. Make all the friends you can—that's the clever thing to do." Well, that was the idea I did my humble best to follow during the time *The Pelican* was under my charge, and it was a plan which proved reasonably satisfactory.

Twenty-eight years is a longish time in the life of a paper like *The Pelican*, and the fact that I kept it going in my possession for that time, is the best answer as to whether it was a success or not. A paper is a costly thing to produce, and you may take it that if it had not been worth doing, it would not have been done. Whether the success was deserved or not is of course another story, and hardly one for me to try to tell. Many people were good enough to offer to become my partners during the time *The Pelican* was in my hands, and on several occasions I could have been relieved of it altogether, on quite satisfactory terms, but I liked the work, hard though it was, and got a vast deal of interest and amusement out of it.

At one time John Corlett, then proprietor of *The Sporting Times*, had a scheme for my joining forces with him, and running the two papers under one control, but though John's special friend on his staff, Colonel Newnham-Davis, the dear old " Dwarf of Blood," also did what he could to push the idea along, I held to the plan that I

would prefer to hoe my own furrow, which I did, till finding I had had enough of the game, and desired to take things more easily, and, moreover, having achieved the sum of coin of the realm which I had set out to secure, I sold the Brown Bird to a syndicate headed by Mr. Charles Higham, who is now editing the paper in its new form so capably and well.

Few men were better known, in what he used to term "Clean shirted Bohemia" than Newnham-Davis, and indeed it is only the bare truth to say of him that he was one of the most popular all-round men in London. He had been a Harrow boy, and when he joined the famous Kent regiment, The Buffs, he saw a deal of service in South Africa, China, and India. It was in Simla that he became famous as an amateur actor, and when he left the Service and came home finally, in '94, he became a member of the famous Old Stagers, who used to give performances at Canterbury, during the Cricket Week.

While he was in India, Davis used to contribute periodically to *The Sporting Times*, and when he came home for good, John Corlett secured his weekly services, and his signature "The Dwarf of Blood" became a regular feature in the paper. For "Master" he also edited *The Man of the World* for a time, and was later practically editor of *The Pink 'Un*, which he understood he was ultimately to control; but Corlett

somewhat suddenly disposed of the paper, to Mr. de Wend Fenton, and the old staff moved off and started *Town Topics*, with "Tale-Pitcher" Binstead as editor, and Mr. Kennedy Jones, M.P., as proprietor.

How "The Dwarf of Blood" came by his curious signature has been told before, I know, but here is how it actually came about, once more.

After a certain supper party, the revellers adjourned to the house of Miss Bessie Bellwood, at that time by far the most popular and famous lady music-hall singer in London, and a highly remarkable impromptu pantomime was there and then produced. The "orchestra" was furnished by one of the best-known composers of the day, seated at the piano, while certain lights of the peerage, the Household Brigade, and Fleet Street, collaborated in the libretto.

Poor Bessie herself became principal boy, and pretty Kate Leamar, of the famous "Sisters Leamar" was the heroine. The "comedians" were mainly men who have achieved eminence in other callings, and might feel coy about having their artistic endeavours recalled now, so we will let them go.

Newnham-Davis, like the man in *A Pantomime Rehearsal* "Wanted to act," but the cast seemed complete, till Bessie, seldom at a loss for long, said, "I know; you shall be the Dwarf of Blood, come out from under the table and groan at the

right time." And so things were. The name stuck to Newnham-Davis, and he was ever afterward "The Dwarf" to his many friends all over the world.

When Romano, proprietor of the famous Strand Restaurant, died, Newnham-Davis and Walter Pallant, were the two prime movers in the regeneration of the place, and in the formation of the company which came to own it. Davis was a remarkable authority on cookery of all sorts and kinds, and his "Dinners and Diners" articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* attracted a deal of attention when they were published. He was also one of the founders of Le Touquet as it now is, wrote a musical comedy for George Edwardes, called *My Lady Madcap*, and with the proceeds thereof built the delightful Châlet Madcap in the Forest of Le Touquet, in which I, according to a lengthy promise, was his first guest.

"The Dwarf" used to delight in giving odd little dinner parties, and one of them which comes back to me vividly, was his famous Guy Fawkes dinner in a certain upper chamber at Romano's, when Mr. Teddy Bayly was manager of the place, previous to Luigi's successful reign.

In the centre of the table, seated on a barrel of gunpowder was a big life-sized guy, while each of the guests had his own special guy facing him. Thus John Corlett's was a neat Little Pink 'Un jockey. Sir Frank Burnand's was a "Punch,"

which paper he was then editing. Bob Martin's was a Ballyhooley Irishman. Sir Douglas Straight, then editor of the *Pall Mall*, had an elaborate Native in front of him, in commemoration of his services in India. The guy of my old school-fellow, Captain Robert Marshall, the delightful playwright was a "Second in Command," while my good friend George R. Sims was faced with a wild-haired Tatcho golliwog, and your servant by a cheerful looking "Sunny Jim" reading an exact little copy of *The Pelican* in a brown cover.

Of Arthur Binstead, who was mainly concerned with *The Dwarf*, and Mr. Horace Lennard, in starting *Town Topics*, one can truthfully say he was that very rare mortal, a genuine humorist. There was no midnight oil about his literary fun ; it was all perfectly natural and spontaneous—or at least gave you the idea of being so.

He was one of the best story-tellers I ever knew, and I have had the good fortune to know some of the most famous of our time ; and he could make more out of slight material than any man of my experience. It was only when you heard someone else try to repeat a story you had heard "Pitcher" relate, that you quite realised the genius of the original teller.

His articles and newspaper stories were good ; his books, such as *A Pink 'Un* and *A Pelican*, *Gal's Gossip*, *Mop Fair*, *Pitcher in Paradise*, and the rest, even better ; but best of all was to hear

him tell at first hand, the latest story he had come by, or invented, to a few appreciative listeners.

He delighted in telling a good story and telling it really well, just as much as his listeners liked hearing it. He was in his own particular way a great actor, and the slight gestures, the quaint expressions of countenance, with which the climax of the tale would be reached, are things one recalls with sad pleasure, when one remembers that the teller is among those who have "gone on ahead."

Among the many admirers of "Pitcher's" writings none was more sincere than a very distinguished scholar, at one time a Professor of St. Andrews University, and not long ago a certain interfering person in an omnibus, passing Kensington Church, and not apparently liking his appearance, bent over to the Professor and said, "Excuse me, sir, but you look very like a German spy!"

The one time professor gazed at the speaker with interest for a moment, and then replied in anything rather than the expected foreign accent, "Excuse *me*, sir, but *you* look very like a German sausage!" and then the conversation came to a very abrupt termination.

## CHAPTER VI

Our first big "scoop"—The Tranby Croft affair—What Edmund Yates said about it—Also what the eminent solicitor thought—How we cornered the "Baccarat scandal" market for a time—The author of the articles—No harm in mentioning his name now—Some *Pelican* contributors—Willië Wilde of *The Daily Telegraph*—His marriage to Mrs. Frank Leslie, the great American newspaper proprietress—His neglected opportunities of great things—A very different man from his notorious brother Oscar—Oscar Wilde's desire—How it went unfulfilled—His subsequent appearance at the Old Bailey—His departure therefrom to do "two years hard"—Some murder trials—The Milsom-Fowler affair at the Old Bailey—How Fowler nearly murdered Milsom in the dock—A real sensation scene—The Tichborne Claimant—What he said—Fleet Street swindlers—Bogus advertising agents who preyed on new papers—I suffer from them—And some of them suffer from me—The simple art of protecting oneself—Sometimes an easier matter than calling in the police—How it answered in my case.

FOR the benefit of those ignorant of the language of Fleet Street, I beg to say that a "scoop" is journalese for a piece of exclusive information. It is an occasion when you get ahead of your fellows with your news, and naturally in a paper which only comes out once a week, the chances of getting in front of the morning and evening journals are limited.

However, we managed to bring off quite a

number of "scoops" in the *Pelican* at various times, and one of the earliest of these which called attention to the paper, and did its circulation a deal of good, was what was known as the Tranby Croft baccarat scandal.

As will no doubt be still remembered, one of the house-party at Tranby Croft, the abode of the Wilsons, the big shipping people, was accused of cheating at baccarat, and as those staying there at the time included King Edward, then Prince of Wales, and a number of well-known people, the matter created a deal of history at the time, more especially as it ultimately found its way into the Law Courts, and there was a very considerable to do, which greatly infuriated that pink of propriety, Queen Victoria, who hated anything and everything of the kind.

It will be recalled that it came out in course of the evidence in Court, that the entire house-party were sworn to secrecy concerning the happening, but some of them certainly talked.

No doubt one man, or woman, told the story to his or her chief friend, in confidence, then he or she passed it on in the same fashion, and soon people were all whispering and nodding their heads about the mystery, concerning which few of them knew precise details. Then, one fine day—I am talking of course of the period prior to the trial—out came *The Pelican* with the whole story, with dates, chapter, and verse, and a considerable



sensation was produced. To start with, the paper promptly went out of print that week, and a second edition had at once to be put in hand. Half the editors of the London daily papers sent along their special men to see me, in order to obtain further pointers, and my good friend Edmund Yates of *The World*, sent a note along commanding my presence at once at York Street, Covent Garden, where *The World* office then was.

When I saw the good Edmund he promptly said, "My boy, you have either got hold of a very big thing indeed, or you have ruined yourself, and spoilt your paper for all time. Sit down and tell me all about it." But greatly as I liked Mr. Yates this seemed rather too much to expect and I told him so. I said that if he had read my issue of the current week, he knew all I had to tell so far, but that in next week's number I should have more to say, and then I resisted, as diplomatically as I knew how, the good "Atlas'" best efforts to pump me.

I knew that from a newspaper point of view, I had got a plum, and I meant to stick to it, as long as possible. And this I did.

A very eminent solicitor, who was later on engaged in the legal proceedings connected with the matter, honoured me with a visit, to point out that I shouldn't have printed anything of the sort I had done, without first having consulted him on the matter, and suggested vaguely that if

I had done so, it might have been considerably to my benefit. I sat quietly and listened to what he had to say, for he was a much older man than myself, but I very steadfastly declined to give him the source of my information, although I was well aware of the very distinguished personage for whom he desired it, and this, too, in spite of considerable inducements held out to me to talk.

As a matter of fact, now that the whole thing is over, and the writer of the article, like so many of the persons concerned in the affair, is no more, there is probably no harm in saying that "The Tranby Croft affair" and the succeeding articles dealing with it, were written by Jimmy Davis, better known to playgoers as "Owen Hall," and he got his information from one of the persons actually present at the happening.

It was interesting to see how the other papers, daily as well as weekly, came out with mere repetitions of our facts, and had to wait on from week to week, in order to give their readers fresh "news." The matter was not merely an ordinary "scoop" for us, but was one which we kept entirely to ourselves for three weeks. We had got at the only source of information which could be tapped, and we held on to it tightly, so long as it was of any use to us. It was, as Edmund Yates had said, "a very big thing" for us, and did the paper a deal of good, bringing it well into the limelight.

Among those who frequently contributed to *The Pelican*, was that very brilliant writer, when he chose to take a little trouble with his work, Willie Wilde. He was a brother, it is true, of the notorious Oscar, but quite a different sort of person, in every way, from him. He was a most cheery good-natured soul, always hard up, no matter how much money he might be earning, but his manner was so agreeable, and his conversation so witty, that even those who knew he was about to borrow from them, were almost always glad to see him.

For several years he was one of the special correspondents and leader writers of *The Daily Telegraph*, and his work attracted a lot of notice. Then Mrs. Frank Leslie, the celebrated owner of *Frank Leslie's Weekly*, and numerous other American papers, and magazines, fell in love with him, took him to the United States and married him.

Willie had a great chance of making half a dozen fortunes, for owing to his wife's influence and his own ability, pretty well anything, journalistically speaking, was open to him, but though he could, and did when he chose, work quickly, he was not at all keen about working often, or indeed at all ; and when he found himself married to a lady of great wealth and remarkable business capabilities, he appeared to consider that there was no need for more than one of the combination

to hustle ; and that perhaps he had better not be the one.

The union did not turn out successfully, and " Wuffalo Will," as his friends called him, it being generally agreed that in many ways he bore little resemblance to the hardy, robust Buffalo Bill, saving in the matter of height and hair, returned to this country, but his star had gone down, and what ought to have been a very brilliant career did not fulfil the earlier hopes it had given.

Edmund Yates was a great believer in Willie Wilde's journalistic abilities, and commissioned him to write one of the Christmas numbers of *The World*, in the days when these things were of considerable importance, and were a sort of revue of the life and people who had made history during the previous twelve months. The wonderful portrait cartoons by Alfred Brian were always a special feature of the Christmas *World*.

As I have said, Willie was in all respects quite a different sort of person from his brother Oscar, and with all his faults, most of which were the effect of a far too easy-going and generous nature, he was in many ways, a good fellow, as well as an exceedingly brilliant man. I speak as one who knew him well.

His brother I knew not at all ; nor did I ever wish to know him, even in the days of his greatest prosperity and notoriety, when he was sought after, and made much of, to what seemed to me,

a sickening extent. I liked neither his appearance, his manner, his monstrous conceit, nor his evil reputation, and carefully avoided being introduced to him.

On one occasion I was lunching at the Café Royal in the upstairs room, and Oscar Wilde, encircled by a crowd of his young men admirers, was feeding at a table a little way off, holding a sort of court for the apparent benefit of everyone else in the restaurant. One of his young men came over to my table, and without any sort of preliminary remark said, "Oscar desires that you be presented to him." "Does he," I replied, "then you can tell your friend that he may go to the devil so far as I am concerned, for I have not the smallest desire to be presented to him." The young man—he is older to-day and a deal more sensible—gasped with apparent horror. "Would you have me tell him that?" he cried. "Yes, I would," I said, "and you can, if you like, add that I am a friend of Charles Brookfield, and of 'Q.'" "Philistine!" retorted the poet's messenger, and departed, presumably to make his report, while I paid my bill and cleared out.

"Q" was of course, the late Lord Queensberry, who with Brookfield was then rapidly collecting the evidence which led to the downfall of the "Apostle of the Beautiful" at the Old Bailey, where not long after I saw Wilde, sentenced with his friend Taylor, to two years hard labour.

The trial made a tremendous sensation at the time, not only in this country, but literally all over the world. However, it is an old and nasty story now, and better left alone, though the verbal duel in Court, between Wilde and Sir Edward Carson is not yet forgotten, and one still recalls the brilliancy of many of Wilde's answers, the way he scored off Counsel, and the curious bull terrier like way in which the Irish barrister, with his remarkable brogue, held on to his victim, and never let go, till he brought him down—very low indeed.

Talking of the Old Bailey recalls other famous trials one has seen and listened to there, most of them, even the murder ones, being deadly dull affairs, till just at the end when sentence was pronounced.

One of the most interesting and sensational that I recall, was the Muswell Hill murder case, when two ruffians named Milsom and Fowler, were tried before Lord Brampton, or Sir Henry Hawkins as he was then. This trial was full of grim details, the showing of blood-stained exhibits, weapons, and the like, and Hawkins was in great form throughout. It was generally known that Milsom had tried to turn Queen's Evidence, and on the last day of the trial, the two culprits sat in the big dock, with a burly police officer between them, as well as the usual gaoler behind, at the top of the steps leading down to the cells.

When the jury went out to consider their verdict, the judge left the Bench, but the prisoners were not taken out of court, for it was clear to everyone that there could only be a verdict of guilty and that it would be arrived at with very little delay.

I was watching the two men very carefully, and was seated at the side of the court quite close to the dock, and I saw Milsom lean over towards Fowler and say with a sort of sickly grin, "Not a chance, 'Bunny.'" In the next second, Fowler, who was an immensely big, powerful fellow, had leapt at Milsom, dashing the intervening policeman aside, and had got him by the throat. They crashed against one end of the dock, which was adorned with a number of panes of glass, and these were promptly smashed to smithereens. Then they swayed across to the other side, smashing all the glass there as well. In a couple of seconds the dock was full of uniformed and plain-clothes policemen, but Fowler was so powerful that he knocked them about like ninepins, and as nearly as no matter succeeded in his object of strangling Milsom.

Everybody in Court yelled, barristers stood on their seats, Miss Minnie Palmer, the famous American actress, who was seated immediately in front of me, gave forth screams of wondrous size to proceed from so small a lady. All the other women in Court joined in, and for a few minutes

there was as lively an imitation of a bear garden gone mad, as you could wish to see.

Later on, when the two men were sentenced, they were brought in heavily handcuffed, and were kept carefully apart by a considerable body of police. In due course, when they were executed, it was generally supposed there would be another scene, but though they were hanged together on the same scaffold, nothing out of the way occurred, the authorities keeping them well apart, by placing a third victim to the supreme penalty, between them, with the result that at the right moment they were all three swung into eternity together, in what I am told was a most satisfactory and workmanlike manner.

As I came away from the Court, after seeing Fowler and Milsom sentenced, I did so by the private staircase, thanks to my friend, the Under-Sheriff of the time, and coming down encountered a poor frail looking woman, crouched on the stairs apparently in the greatest distress. I tried to comfort her as well as I could, and told her to endeavour to cheer up, whatever her trouble was. "How can I cheer up," she said, "I am Mrs. Milsom." There was no answer to that; and so I just came away as quietly as possible.

One of the most famous trials of the world was that of the Tichborne Claimant. Arthur Orton is merely a name in these days, but there was a time when the whole of Great Britain was divided



into two great camps, those who believed that he was Sir Roger Tichborne as he claimed to be, and those who regarded him as an impudent humbug engaged in the biggest bluff on record.

It seems incredible that an ignorant, aitchless butcher from Wagga-Wagga, should have induced many people to believe that he was the missing baronet, and even secured the sympathy and credence of old Lady Tichborne that he was her son, but he certainly did it, and so confident were many that the monstrosly obese fellow was the actual man he purported to be, that they produced money in large quantities in order that he might be enabled to contest his claim.

It was as "THE CLAIMANT" that Arthur Orton was generally known in this country, though he stuck hard and fast to the story that he was Sir Roger Tichborne, even after he had completed the long term of penal servitude which the law of the land awarded to him for his endeavours.

After his return to freedom, there were some—not many it is true—who continued to believe that the ex-butcher, whom the rigours of Portland had reduced to normal proportions, was an ill-used martyr, scandalously kept out of his rights, and these confiding folk backed their opinion with coin of the realm, an action which it seems to me must always denote very solid belief.

After a time even these credulous persons began to tail off, and dark days fell upon the Claimant,

who was driven to various expedients in order to raise the wind, and among others to the joyful acceptance of the offer of an engagement to appear at the old Royal Music-hall, now the Holborn Empire, to exhibit himself for the benefit of the curious, and to make a brief statement of his woes.

The manager of the place at that time was the late Tom Carlton, and knowing that I was ever interested in meeting people who had done anything out of the common, even if it were only "time" in sufficient quantity to take them out of the ordinary, he, Carlton, one day turned up at the office of my paper about luncheon-time, accompanied by a pleasant, quiet, sad-faced old gentleman, whom he introduced to me as "The Claimant of whom you have no doubt heard."

Having done so from the days of early childhood, since the period when Tichborne candy—"crack the rock where'er you will, you'll find Sir Roger in it still"—was one of my favourite delicacies, I was naturally interested in meeting so distinguished a celebrity face to face, and being about to adjourn for my midday meal, I invited my visitors to accompany me.

Having heard all manner of persons, learned and foolish, legal and otherwise, discuss and quarrel over the innocence or wickedness of the Claimant's cause for many previous years, it was very interesting to hear the worthy man pour forth details of his very lengthy trials—there were

two of them—and of his infinitely longer term of penal servitude, at first hand.

It took many great legal minds to decide whether Orton was himself or Tichborne, but on this occasion the answer to the conundrum was made plain in a flash, when after the Claimant had given vent to a number of what seemed to me singularly committing statements in the course of one of his lengthy and humorous stories, as to how he had "bested" the eminent Counsel arrayed against him, Carlton turned to him and said, "Look here, Claimant, are you or are you not Sir Roger?" and I still recollect the Claimant's whimsical smile as he replied, "Well, Tommy; you know how things are. What's the good of trying to kid you?"

It was more the tone in which they were spoken, than the actual words themselves, which served to make the thing perfectly clear to me, if indeed I had previously had any doubts about the matter.

There used to be, and perhaps there still is in Fleet Street, a gang of swindling, alleged advertising agents and canvassers, who made new papers their special prey, and on whose managers they unloaded advertisement orders of the most non-reliable sort, demanding, frequently with threats, prompt payment of considerable commission—usually 20 per cent.

As a rule a new paper finds great difficulty in securing the needful advertising support, without

which it cannot exist, unless its proprietor is a philanthropist and a very wealthy one too. And so it is that the managements of such organs are usually rather too willing to believe that all advertisement orders brought to them are genuine, and worth coin of the realm later on, when they have been executed.

Every new journal is a mark for these harpies, and at the time *The Pelican* was born, there happened to have been rather a dearth of Fleet Street sucklings, for some time previously. Wherefore the entire gang of these robbers surged up our somewhat steep stairs at 84 Fleet Street, intent upon securing as much of our not too ample money as they could force out of us.

I was caught with one or two of those bogus orders at the beginning, and duly paid the required commissions, but after that I grew more cautious, and as a result the Fleet Street sharps became more wary and skilful in their tactics. Some of them, however, didn't condescend to the use of camouflage to any great extent, but relying on size and a bullying manner, would practically demand my money or my paper's life !

I was not keen about parting with either, and the climax came one day when an enormously large, red-faced, red-haired, rather drunken and very quarrelsome pirate, came up to our lair and demanded five pounds for orders which he said he might bring in at some indefinite future period.

Looking through my window on to Fleet Street, I noticed several members of the gang waiting about to see whether I was likely to stand this latest and most dastardly attack. I felt the time had come for action, and so I temporised and talked to my bully while I slowly got him, with his very extensive back to the top of our very steep stairs. Then I let him have all I knew with my left and right on his chest, which had the effect of over-balancing him, and down he went right into Fleet Street, very much like a pole-axed ox.

When he had picked himself up and found that only bruises had apparently resulted, he proclaimed aloud the various ways in which he intended to kill me, and started to come upstairs again to execute his design. I pointed out as briefly as possible, and in as direct a language as I knew how, that I stood on the top step, that by the time he had got three-quarter way up, his head would be on a level with my foot, that my boots were thick, and that I proposed to use them to the best of my ability. After a remarkable flow of blasphemy from him and his companions, who now took a hand in the game, and sundry dark threats of what they would do when they got me outside, the deputation withdrew and I was left alone. Nor did the gang ever afterwards interfere with me in any way.

Ours was, in a variety of ways, a distinctly strenuous life, at the start of the paper, and

threats of various sorts were not infrequent ; but as I had even then heard and have since found out for myself, threatened men live fairly long.

Of course I might have given my bogus advertisement friends in charge, but I should have had to devote a good deal of time to the matter, and should in the end have not merely failed to recover my money, but have had to spend more, and so my somewhat primitive methods seemed good enough. They answered all right, anyhow.

## CHAPTER VII

The new offices—A nest of ladies' journals—Distinguished sub-editors—Our only libel action—On trial at the Mansion House—Mr. Charles Gill, K.C., and Mr. Justice Avory—Didcott the music-hall agent—Father Stanton of St. Albans, Holborn—A fine priest and a great man—An unpaid curate for fifty years—"Dad's" opinion of great wealth—The law of balance—Money and misfortune—The frequency with which they go together—What Charles Frohman said about it—His story of the Satrap and the physician—The man who had no shirt—Frohman and Barrie—How Frohman died in the *Lusitania* tragedy—Barrie and Peter Pan—How Peter nearly had another name—A wonderfully successful play—How its author believed it would be a financial failure—How Barrie meant to indemnify Frohman against loss in connection with its production! The play he meant to present Frohman with.

IN course of time it became necessary to seek out larger offices than those wherein *The Pelican* had been born, and after a good deal of searching, suitable premises were found at 10 and 11 Fetter Lane, which is a largish building, almost opposite the Record Office. Here we found ourselves in a veritable nest of Ladies' Papers, for the building housed among others, *Hearth and Home*, *Myra's Journal*, and *Woman*. I fancy Mrs. Talbot-Coke was chief proprietor of these journals, and her son-in-law, a charming fellow named Langton-Bailey,

managed things for her. *Hearth and Home* had quite a number of men who got on as its sub-editors at various times. Among them being, Robert Hichens, one of the products of David Anderson's School of Journalism, in Chancery Lane, and Arnold Bennett who later on became editor of *Woman*.

In one respect at least I believe I scored something of a record during my twenty-eight years of *The Pelican*, and it was in the matter of libel actions, for during that fairly lengthy period, we had only one case of the sort brought against us, and that one the Lord Mayor, before whom it was tried, in dismissing the action said, that in his opinion it never ought to have been brought.

When you take into consideration that *The Pelican* was a paper which devoted a good deal of its space to personalities, and, moreover, that it usually spoke its mind very clearly, I think the fact that we escaped being pulled into Court more often than only once, at least proved our luck, if nothing else. Perhaps the bad two-shilling piece, taken so early in the paper's career, had something to do with this.

Our only libel action was brought by a man who called himself Hugh Jay Didcott, and who was at the time quite a personage in the theatrical and music-hall world. He had by far the largest theatrical business agency of its kind, and was, in the opinion of many, a man of great consequence.



The trouble came about through the publication of a story called "A Very Odde Volume," and in it there figured a music-hall agent who was called "Mr. York Road," in which locality, by the way, most of the agents at that time had their offices. Didcott said that "York Road" was meant for him; but he was quite wrong in his belief. The man who wrote the story had never seen or heard, at the time, of Didcott, who was, among other things, the father of that clever little actress, Miss Maudi Darrell, who died all too young, soon after her marriage to the very wealthy Mr. Ian Bullough, who subsequently married Miss Lily Elsie.

Now it is a fact that no matter how hard you try to do so, you will find it impossible to write a story of any sort or kind, which won't fit somebody or other in the world; for everything conceivable has been done to, or by someone, and when Didcott said that "York Road" was meant for him, I saw to my very considerable consternation, that there were many marked points of resemblance between the real man and imaginary one.

In spite of my denial that "Mr. York Road" was meant for him, Didcott hailed me before the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House Police Court on a charge of criminal libel. This meant of course that if the Lord Mayor had sent the case for trial, I should have had to defend myself at

the Old Bailey, and if I had lost, I should have been sent to prison.

The late Mr. Stead gave utterance to the opinion that it was requisite as well as necessary, for the complete journalist to have been in prison at least once, as he himself had been. But I venture to think otherwise. I can imagine lots of funnier things than doing time.

The case was duly heard before Sir Stuart Knill, the Lord Mayor; Mr. Charles Gill, instructed by Sir Charles Russell, defended me, and Mr. Horace Avory, now a judge of the High Court, appeared to prosecute.

The results of the case might have been most serious to me, but fortunately Didcott was a man with a highly remarkable past, and under a very terrible cross-examination at the hands of Mr. Gill, it was made clear that his character had not been damaged, and that, to quote Counsel, "he had no character to clear, and it would be absolutely impossible for him to do so, if he tried."

In the end the Lord Mayor dismissed the case, and everyone was quite pleased, except, of course, Didcott. To defend "an action which never should have been brought" cost me £250. However, we got this back again in advertisement, for every paper in the Kingdom, from *The Times* downwards, alluded to the affair, in most cases at considerable length. This was the only action

for libel *The Pelican* had while under my control. There were threats of one or two others but they came to nothing.

Some little time after the Didcott action I was at the Eccentric Club one evening, when Sir Simeon Stuart, who was at that time City Marshal, came in, with a kindly faced old gentleman, to whom he presented me. My name, if he caught it, conveyed nothing to my new friend, but my countenance apparently did, for after looking at me fixedly he said "I fancy we have met before, but I can't think where. I seem to know your face quite well." I hastened to assure him that his was equally familiar to me, and that I was not soon likely to forget it, for I had regarded it with much more than ordinary interest for an entire day at the Mansion House Police Court. He was, of course, Sir Stuart Knill, the Lord Mayor, whom I afterwards came to know intimately.

A near neighbour of ours in Fetter Lane, and a very dear friend, was the famous Father Stanton, of St. Albans Church, Holborn, and his somewhat sudden and unexpected death, left a real blank in the hearts of the many who knew and loved him. We were all aware that Father Stanton—dear old "Dad" as he was generally known to his flock—had been very ill, but it was hoped that he was well over his trouble and that he would soon be coming back to us. "I am to get quite

well, so they say," he wrote to me, shortly before the end came, "but the process is necessarily slow at 73." Still we hoped he was to be with us again "after Easter" and the news of his death came as a shock and very real grief to people all over London and the country. *The Daily Telegraph* spoke of him as "one of the most widely known and best loved Anglican clergymen in London." He was all that at least. The paper also said "London lost one of the best and noblest, one of the vitalising Christian forces she could ill afford to spare."

The break up of one of the most remarkable brotherhoods of clergy which ever existed in this country, came when the "old gang" of famous St. Albans, Holborn, ceased to be after the going of Father Suckling, the Vicar. The little band of brothers which dwelt together in such perfect unity, for so many years, in the Clergy House adjoining St. Albans Church, consisted, in addition to the Vicar, of Father Russell, Father Hogg, Father Pearkes, and the famous Father Stanton, who might, of course, have had pretty well any sort of preferment he desired, but who was content to remain for more than fifty years, an unpaid curate of the famous and beautiful church, which has meant so much to so many.

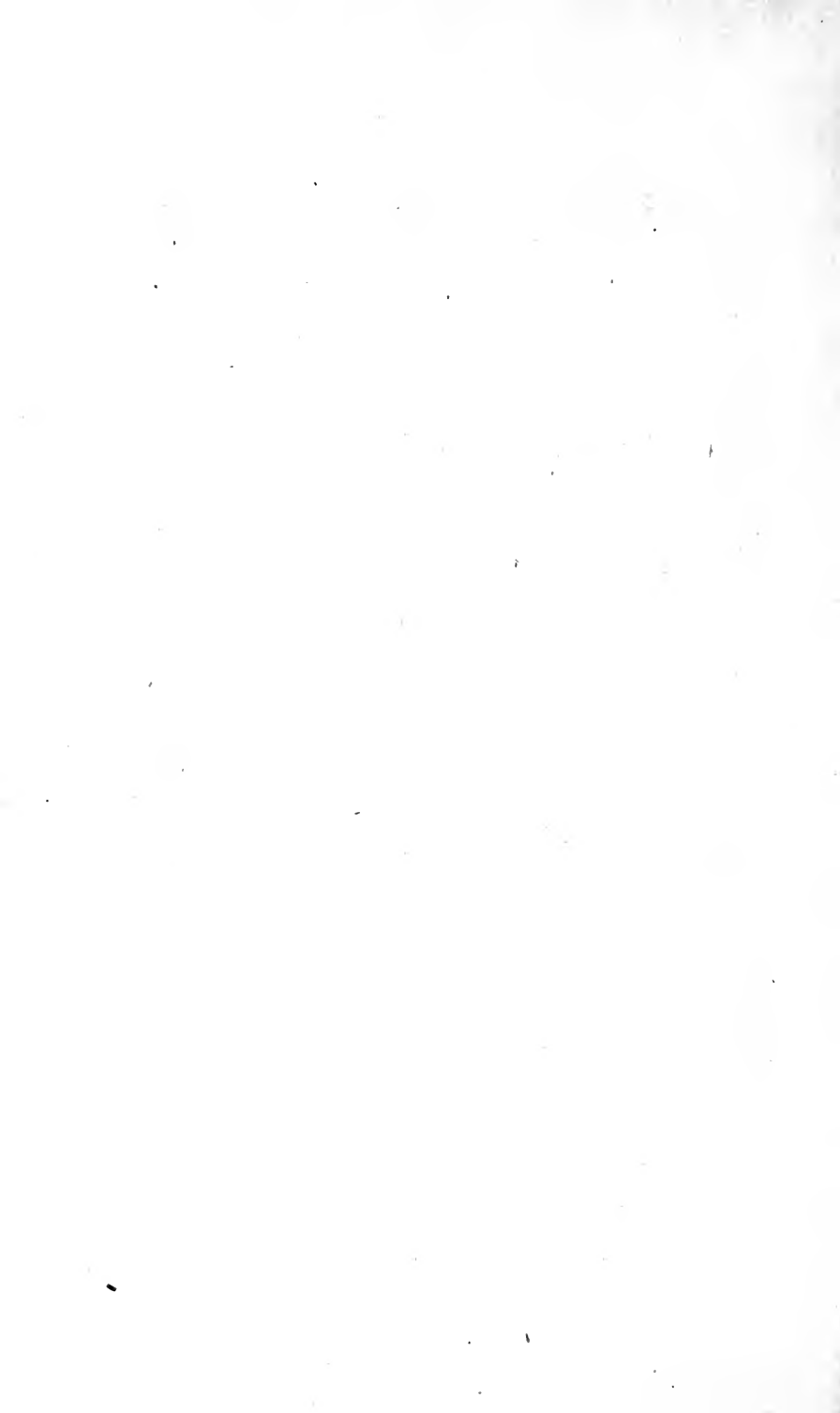
In addition to being a wonderful preacher, a great parish priest, and one of the saintliest men who ever lived, Father Stanton possessed the



*Photo.*

*A. H. Fry*

FATHER STANTON, THE FAMOUS PRIEST OF ST. ALBAN'S, HOLBORN



keenest sense of humour. He was a positive mine of good stories, and none could tell them better than he. He was also a thorough man-of-the-world, in the best sense, and was seldom surprised at anything, though at times some of his remarkable parishioners tried him fairly highly.

On one occasion he had been working very hard since the early hours, till four in the afternoon, when he decided that a little rest would be no bad thing, wherefore he told the servant who answered the bell of the Clergy House, that he couldn't, and wouldn't, see anyone else that day.

Soon afterwards a robust fellow of the costermonger class might have been seen tugging at the bell of the Stanton abode.

“ Is the Dad in ? ” he asked the maid who answered his summons. Stanton was always “ the Dad ” to his flock.

“ Yes, he's in, but he's tired ; he's lying down, and he can't see anyone,” was the reply.

“ Blime, that's a nice thing, I don't think, for a bloke to 'ear wot's come to see him spiritool. Look 'ere, I *got* to see him. You tell him it's Jim Jones, and the matter is important *and* spiritool.” And so the maiden sped upstairs to Father Stanton's chambers, wakened the fine old gentleman up, and gave him the message.

“ All right,” said the Dad. “ If it's as he says, I must see him,” and so getting into his cassock, he made his way downstairs.

"Jim Jones" turned out to be an absolute stranger. From his appearance, he was one who probably had had a difference of opinion with the police the previous evening, and had, as likely as not, just been discharged from the nearest police court.

"Father," he said, "I called to see you, and its a spiritoole matter; leastways," he added, noting the good Stanton's very shrewd and somewhat sceptical gaze, "it ain't so much spiritoole as you might think; but that don't signify. What it comes to is this. Father, have you got a pair of trousers?"

"Yes," replied the Father, committing himself, as you will note, as little as possible.

"'Ave you now; well, where are they?"

"I have got them on," was the reply, "and you can't have them, but you can have this bob, and now out you go for I am very tired," and then the pair laughed heartily at one another, while the Father gently assisted his visitor to the door.

"Blime, Dad, but you are 'ot stuff—not 'arf"—was the Coster's comment as he took his departure.

It was my privilege—and it is one of the very few things I am proud of—to have been a fairly intimate friend of Father Stanton, and although he did not regard with any special consequence what most people wrote or said about him, he



was at times disposed to attach importance to what his flock thought of him as a priest.

One of his most constant followers was an aged and somewhat disreputable person, a vendor of shell-fish, and whose chief virtue was the regularity of his attendance at church on Sunday.

"Do you know, Dad," he said one day as he leant on the arm of his barrow, and gave Father Stanton the benefit of his views upon sundry matters, "you St. Albans Clergy are an uncommon rummy lot—oh very rummy and no mistake."

"How do you mean exactly?" asked the good Father.

"Well," said the other, "there's Father Russell, for a start. I would call 'im broad; a bit broad, ain't 'e? Then there's Father 'Ogg; well, 'e's 'igh, oh yus, 'e's 'igh, there's no doubt about that. Father Suckling 'e's the Vicar. Well, let 'im parse; and Father Pearkes is all right too. 'E's the kids' pal and the old women's."

"Yes," said Stanton, waiting for further enlightened criticism, "and how about me; you haven't mentioned me, you know?"

"Oh, you," replied the vendor of doubtful shell-fish, "*you*—well I hardly know what to say about *you*. Blowed if I don't believe as you ain't no church at all!" With which crushing retort he left his somewhat astonished hearer to pursue his calling, and the fact that I was the next

person that dear Stanton met, accounts for the repetition of the tale here.

Father Stanton was delighted with his critic and perhaps just a bit mystified.

"What do you think he *really* meant," he asked between his smiles, and I was wholly unable to say.

Father Stanton was a very manly man, as they all were, and no doubt still are, at St. Albans, a thing which accounts for the fact that it is one of the few churches in London, or elsewhere, where the men of the congregation outnumber the women. He was loved by all who knew him and in his own parish, where he was wellnigh worshipped, you could often see him dodging about the streets, coming out of one poor dwelling, and disappearing into another, a tall striking figure in his cassock, usually partially covered by an aged grey overcoat—"disgracefully shabby, isn't it, but it's so comfortable"—and his biretta stuck so far on the back of his head that you wondered how it remained on.

He was a great preacher, as well as a great parish priest; and he was a great actor. He had real dramatic genius, which was much helped by his striking appearance, and he had one of the most beautiful—I use the word advisedly—smiles I ever remember to have seen.

You recall how beautiful Henry Irving's smile was? Well, Father Stanton's was just like that.

With his great gifts, he could no doubt have had all sorts of preferment if he had wanted it, but he desired nothing other than to remain on for over fifty years, an unpaid curate of St. Albans. He was always at the call of the sorrowful. If anyone was in trouble, there was always "Dad" to turn to. Others might fail, but he at least was sure. "Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived." How the quotation fits!

Father Stanton used to say that if there was one thing he could understand less than another, it was the desire of most people to be very rich, and many persons a deal more worldly in their ideas than the good priest must share the feeling he had about money in too great quantity, if from no other reason than the very broad, but none the less clear one, that the possession of superabundant wealth almost always seems to carry considerable unhappiness along with it.

There really would seem to be a law of balance in this, as in many other matters, and if inordinate wealth comes to man or woman, it is quite remarkable how tragedy of greater or lesser degree appears to accompany it. Moderate riches, comfortable circumstances, and freedom from anxiety seem good. More than that does not.

You have merely to recall the cases of most of the very wealthy men of present, or recent times, to see that this is so. Take Mr. Rockefeller, the wealthiest man in the world. How many of his

millions could you or I gladly have if we could induce hair to grow on his billiard-ball-like head ? The late Mr. Pierpont Morgan, too, with his enormous fortune ; how much of it would he have exchanged, think you, for a new nose, instead of the bulbous affair he was condemned to ? Then there was Baron Hirsch, the intimate friend of King Edward, possessed of unlimited wealth, who had no digestion to speak of, and who lived day after day upon chopped-up, partly-cooked meat, and hot water !

Think, too, of Mr. Alfred Beit, as kindly a man as could be, and several times over a millionaire. For years before he died he was a bundle of nerves, hardly able to sleep, having to be fed like a child, and leaving his huge fortune while still quite young. And Sir Julius Wernher, too ; think of his troubles, and of the terrible illness which killed him. Recall the tragic ending of Barney Barnato, who took his own life at sea ; that of poor Woolfie Joel, who had his so ruthlessly taken from him, when he looked to be one of the most fortunate, as he certainly was one of the wealthiest, young men in the world. And so on.

One could readily enough go ahead adding to the sad list, but surely these instances tend far enough to prove that there is some mysterious law of balance ; of compensation.

For my humble self, I think that if ever I came to be very rich—a thing which I have not the

smallest chance nor the slightest desire to be—I should put my hands up to guard my head, and look all round for the blow which I certainly believe would fall.

The late Charles Frohman, most important of American theatrical managers, who made several fortunes for himself, and many for other people, knew the value of too much money rather better than most.

Talking of its possession he said, “ I don’t work for money, the hardest workers never work for money. When did money bring content ? You know the story of the Satrap and the Persian physician ? A certain young and profligate Satrap, exhausted alike in body and mind, sent for a famous Persian physician, and when the man arrived he said, ‘ I have squandered my youth in riotous living, my frame is enfeebled like an old man’s, and my mind is divided by remorse and horror. Can you help me ? ’ The Persian physician looking gravely at the pale Satrap answered, ‘ You have but one hope. Go forth and find, if there be such, a perfectly contented man. Persuade this man to exchange shirts with you and you will straightway be strong and happy again.’ The Satrap set out upon his search. He travelled many months in vain, and at last he heard of a cobbler who was said to be absolutely contented. The Satrap came at last to the cobbler’s door. The house was but a hovel, and

on a board before it the cobbler lay asleep. Awakening him, the Satrap asked if it were true that he was quite content with life, and the cobbler, with a laugh, declared that he was. Then said the Satrap, 'I have a boon to ask at your hands. It is that you will exchange shirts with me. For thus a wise physician has said, I shall become wise and contented also.'

"But the cobbler shook his head." 'Most cheerfully would I grant your request young man,' he began, 'but——' 'Nay, nay, deny me not,' the Satrap cried, 'I will pay you any sum you care to name.' 'I seek not your gold,' said the cobbler, 'but—but——' 'But what?' cried the Satrap. 'The truth is,' replied the cobbler, 'I have no shirt!'"

It was Charles Frohman who, standing on the tilted deck of the ill-fated *Lusitania*, sunk by the murderous German pirates in the early days of the Great War, said, looking at the sea wherein he knew he was to be drowned, "Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure of life."

We of this country owe Charles Frohman much, and among many other things, let it never be forgotten, that it was he who gave us Sir James Barrie's Peter Pan, the Boy who never grew up.

It may interest playgoers to know that Barrie's first title for the famous play was *The Great White Feather*, which Frohman liked well enough. Later on when the author decided that it would

be an improvement to call the play after its leading character, Frohman again cordially agreed.

He has left it on record how interesting the very beginning of *Peter Pan* was. Barrie had agreed to write a play for the American manager for production in London, and met him at dinner one night at the Garrick Club. Barrie seemed fretful and uneasy, and on his host asking him what was the matter, he told him. Said Barrie, "I have to deliver you a play. I have written it, but I am certain it will not be a commercial success. Still it is a dream-child of mine, and I am so anxious to see it on the stage, that I have written another play, which I will give you, and which will compensate you for any loss you may make on the first one.

Now the play which Barrie was so doubtful about was *Peter Pan*, which, as everyone knows, has made several fortunes, and the other play which was to indemnify Frohman from loss upon Peter's production, was *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, which had quite a brief run, and out of which very little, if any, fortune was made!

In America, the famous actress Miss Maude Adams created the part of Peter. In London, when the play was first produced at the Duke of York's theatre, on the 27th December, 1904, the first Peter was Miss Nina Boucicault, youngest daughter of Dion Boucicault, the one time famous Irish actor. Other Peters since then have been

Miss Cissie Loftus, Miss Pauline Chase, Miss Fay Compton, and Miss Madge Titheradge, each of whom has been good in the part, but none of whom ever gave it quite the wistfulness and "fairyness" with which its original player endowed it.



## CHAPTER VIII

A London first night at the theatre—The terror thereof for the players—An audience of professional play-goers—Every one a critic—Interruptions from the front—How some actors answered them—The mistake of so doing—A revue comedian's error—How a well-known player in *Called Back* suffered—Mr. Lowenfeld's opinion of his audience—Sir Charles Wyndham and "The Man in the White Hat"—The elder George Grossmith and the humorist in the gallery—How Sir Henry Irving lost his temper—What Edmund Yates said about the happening—Bessie Bellwood and the retort courteous—The Younger George Grossmith's first good part—How he made it grow—Mr. John L. Shine's prophecy concerning George, which came true—The curious mishap at the opening of the Shaftesbury—The worst of "cheap houses"—£70,000 for a £16,000 theatre—A jump in prices—The Old Pavilion—My friend the Chairman—Mr. Arthur Roberts and Mr. James Fawn in the heyday of their music-hall triumphs—How Mr. Roberts forsook the halls for the theatres.

**I**T has always seemed to me that one of the most terrifying and nerve-racking ordeals possible for a human being to go through, must be to appear in the first presentation of a play at a big London theatre. The audience is on such an occasion always an exceedingly keen and critical one, made up in great part of people who from choice or necessity, as in the case of the large body of newspaper dramatic critics, seldom go to the theatre at any other time. Every lad in the gallery is a more than ordinarily critical

play-goer on such an evening, and the knowledge that the audience is thus constituted, can afford little comfort to any actor or actress who suffers at all from nerves—and what player worthy of the name does not ?

Under such a strain it must be a difficult thing for an actor to avoid doing or saying something which he or she would not dream of, in less strenuous circumstances.

All the same, no matter how dull and unappreciative an audience may be, or how inclined to guy the show or the players in it, it has ever seemed to me the worst of bad business for an actor on the stage to make allusion to the fact, as one has seen and heard done on several notable occasions.

For close on thirty-five years I was a professional dramatic critic, and attended all London first-night shows at the theatre, and during that time saw several instances of players losing their heads and saying what they thought of their "kind friends in front." The results of so doing were invariably more or less disastrous.

Not long ago in course of the performance of the revue at a well-known theatre one of the leading performers finding sundry of his quips missing fire expressed his opinion with regard to the mental capacity of the audience to another member of the company, in terms quite loud enough to be heard in the fourth row of the stalls.

Now this sort of thing was decidedly unwise, and was, moreover, exceedingly unfair to the management of the theatre which was paying the performer in question his salary. It has been said that it is ever an unwise thing to quarrel either with the Press or the Police, and I can't help believing that it is at least equally inexpedient to say things about, or to an audience, which has paid its money wisely, or otherwise, on purpose to be entertained.

One has known the addressing of an audience from the stage attended with very serious results to the players, and sometimes managers who spoke. In this connection no doubt some of my readers will recall the historical occasion at the Prince of Wales' Theatre during the playing of *Called Back*, when a very well-known actor—there is no need to mention his name now—exasperated by the interruptions of a portion of the audience, stepped down to the footlights and told them very clearly and precisely what he thought about their intelligence. I am not prepared to say that his estimate was other than a perfectly correct one ; all the same its expression was unwise, and for a long time after that actor could not, or at any rate did not play in London, but had to remain in Australia till the Pit and Gods forgave him, or forgot the occurrence.

There was also the memorable occasion when Mr. Hans or Heinrich Lowenfeld, owner of the

Apollo Theatre, talked a bit to one of his first-night audiences when the curtain fell on a scene of considerable turbulence, and a portion of those present headed by Mr. Carl Hentschel, at that time President of the Playgoers Club, responded with much spirit and asperity.

Sir Charles Wyndham's address to the celebrated "Man in the White Hat" at a Criterion first night is also still remembered, and George Grossmith the elder, kindest and best-natured of men, and father of the present "G. G.," was rash enough once to be lured into an argument with certain interrupting souls in the gallery of the old Globe Theatre on the occasion of the production of *The Gay Pretenders*. The piece was hanging fire a bit, and the humorists on high sought to enliven matters by suggesting sundry lines. "You're very funny up there," said the justly exasperated but very rash Mr. Grossmith. "More than you are down there," came the instant retort; and then the audience smiled loudly.

Even sweet-natured Sir Henry Irving forgot himself somewhat on the night *A Winter's Tale* was produced at the Lyceum. The audience was unfriendly and turbulent, and at the finish, goaded to a pitch beyond control, Sir Henry said things to the house which I know he greatly regretted, for he told me so himself the following day, what time we journeyed together to spend

Sunday at Edmund Yates's pretty place, Thames Lawn at Marlow. I remember, too, how the kindly sage of *The World* chided his old friend considerably upon his minor indiscretion, and how the great actor and splendid fellow took his talking-to very much like a chastened schoolboy, and replied in all humility, "Yes I know, my dear Edmund, I was a fool—a damned fool; but—we—can't—always be wise, can we—eh?"

On the other hand one has known an interrupter scored off neatly and satisfactorily from the music-hall stage, where the artistes were not so tied down to convention as they were at the theatre. As, for instance, there was the case of that somewhat rough edged, but none the less very genuine comedienne Bessie Bellwood, who found herself rudely interrupted one night at the old Pavilion music-hall by an idiot who persisted in throwing pennies on to the stage while she was singing.

Bessie stood the wag for a time, while the audience tittered, and then feeling that the period had arrived to put things right for herself, she stopped dead in the middle of her song, and marking the money-thrower, she remarked quite pleasantly and naturally, "Don't chuck your pennies away, young man; you may come to want them badly one day. I know; I've been hard up myself."

She had the House with her at once, and the

crushed humorist faded away into the night, as inconspicuously as he could.

And, by the way, talking of the elder Grossmith recalls the fact that my old and always young friend George Grossmith numbers the Shaftesbury among the several theatres which he and his partner, Mr. Edward Laurillard, control, and it is particularly interesting that he should be there as one of its lessees and managers, for it was at the Shaftesbury that he made his first success, when he appeared there as Lord Percy Pimpleton in *Morocco Bound*, one of the earliest of the musical comedies, which was the joint work of Mr. Adrian Ross, Mr. Arthur Branscombe, and Dr. Osmond Carr. The part was quite a small one at the start, but the actor managed to add little bits to it night after night, so that in the end it became one of the best in the piece.

In this connection, one recalls a trifling argument which occurred one evening between "G. G. Junior," as he then was, and Mr. John L. Shine who played Spoofah Bey in the piece, and I recollect George saying, "Although I play fool parts I am not a fool altogether, and I mean to get on." "Oh, yes," replied Shine. "no doubt you'll get on. You'll come to own the theatre in time if you go on as you are doing." And now George *has* come to own it!

Still harping on the Shaftesbury, recalls the fact that the theatre was built by Mr. John Lancaster

of Manchester, and at the time he erected it he was considered to be doing a very risky thing in moving so far from the Strand, which was at that time the centre of Theatre-land, to Shaftesbury Avenue, then being created out of a network of slums.

Mr. Lancaster built the theatre primarily for his wife Miss Wallis, at that time well known as a Shakespearean actress, and she duly opened the house with a performance of *As You Like It*, or rather she attempted to do so, for on the first night the heavy fire-proof curtain failed to act for some reason or other, and went on strike, with the result that the audience had to be dismissed; a dismal start truly for a new playhouse.

I remember the late Mr. Matthew Brodie the well-known actor, who was in the cast, saying to me later on the same evening, "That's the worst of those cheap theatres." "What do you call cheap?" said I. "John Lancaster paid exactly and precisely £16,000 for the house, he told me so himself," said "Matt," as everyone who knew him used to call the excellent Scotch player. Mr. Joseph Benson of Liverpool, the most recent purchaser of the house, was supposed to have got a very good bargain when he bought it not long ago for £70,000, and no doubt the Shaftesbury is well worth that sum, but the difference between £16,000 and £70,000 is a considerable one, and recalls the often quoted opinion of Sir Squire

Bancroft that, "The man who owns the bricks and mortar seldom loses."

Some little way back I alluded to the old Pavilion which stood on the ground occupied by the present very handsome theatre. It was a great place in its day, but of course it was a very different house from the present fine one, and the old idea of the "Singing Shanty behind the Public House" was still retained a good deal, for not only was there a chairman at his table on an elevated seat with his back to the stage, to say "Gentlemen, give your orders while the waiters are in the room"; but the audience instead of sitting as we now of course do facing the stage, did so on crimson velvet lounges at marble topped tables set sideways to it, so that the performance was only seen with considerable difficulty, the entertainment contained in the glasses in front of us being generally regarded—certainly by the management at least—as the more important attraction.

For myself I own up to a lingering fondness for the bygone days of the Pavilion, when each performer, as he or she came on, had a word or two of somewhat full-blown chaff with Mr. Harry Cavendish, the chairman, who, ivory mallet in hand, seated on his raised throne, announced the "turns," led the choruses and the applause, stated that Mr. Fred Albert, or Mr. Charles Godfrey, or The Great Macdermott would appear



again, smoked steadily throughout the evening, and drank with amazing cordiality everything that was offered to him.

And you may take it from me that the chairman had lots to drink and to smoke offered him, for it was recognised as a very privileged thing to sit at his table and pay for drinks for himself and his friends, and there was, I can assure you, keen competition for a seat at the great table, ridiculous as this may seem in these days.

At the period I write of, the chief attractions at the Pavilion were Mr. Arthur Roberts, and Mr. James Fawn, who at that time worked a good deal in double harness. For the half-hour or three-quarters of an hour which their combined shows occupied, the place would fill up to suffocation. Mr. Fawn usually sang his two or three songs first, then followed Mr. Roberts, also as a soloist, but they invariably ended up by singing a topical duet, and my word! some of those duets were topical, and tropical. One of the most amusing of them was, if I recollect aright, "Tidings of comfort and joy," a ditty which would, if it were sung to-day, doubtless make a present-time Pavilion audience sit up and marvel considerably.

Of Arthur Roberts' innumerable successes, which set the town ringing, "If I Were Only Long Enough" and "Lend Me a Cab-Fare, Duckie" recur with great vividness. This last was, I think, the ditty which led to his temporary retirement

from the music-hall stage, and to his appearance at the Avenue Theatre in *La Vie*, and as will be remembered, he remained on at the Avenue to score many subsequent successes in *The Old Guard*, *Nadgy*, *Lancelot the Lovely*, and other cheerful pieces of the sort. Of course he had repeatedly appeared at Drury Lane and elsewhere in pantomime before this, but his Avenue engagement was, I fancy, his first regular one at the theatres.

Mr. Roberts had an extraordinary personal following, and he well deserved to possess it, for at his best he was a remarkably amusing man and never for two evenings quite alike. People used not to say "Let us go to the Avenue and see *The Old Guard*," or whatever the piece was, which was being given at the house on the Embankment at the time, but "Let us go and see Arthur Roberts." He was pretty well the beginning, middle, and end of every show he appeared in, and at that time he had his particular field almost entirely to himself. With us just now, there are three or four comedians who are equally good, and more or less equally sought after, for Mr. Harry Tate, and the three Georges, Graves, Robey, and Huntley, each have their respective followings who swear by them. But in his day Arthur Roberts stood alone. He was in a class by himself. It was a case of Eclipse first, and the rest nowhere—or at least a very long way behind.

## CHAPTER IX

The Pelican Club and something about it—Who the Pelicans were—How the club was started—Shifter's enterprise—The coming of Swears—A strong committee—An era of boxing—How Swears bought Shifter out—What became of half of the "monkey" Shifter received for his share—A sound philosopher—What the club was like—Its remarkable adornments—How King Edward visited the place when Prince of Wales—The result of a broken promise—Fatty's chair—Major Hope-Johnstone's celebrated moustache—How Lord Esmé Gordon bought it—The Pelican page-boy who sought to better himself—The coaching set—Jem Selby its High Priest—The celebrated record drive to Brighton and back—Those who took part in it—The bet won with ten minutes to spare—How the event was celebrated.

**I**N these days people often ask what the Pelican Club was exactly ; what its objects were ; who were its members ; how it came into being at all ; and how it had ultimately to put up its shutters. And to such as take an interest in the genesis of a place which certainly made history in its time, I propose with their permission to recount a few facts.

To begin with, the Pelican Club was not really the Pelican at all at its start, which statement may sound somewhat Irish, but is none the less true, for it was as The Star at 21 Denman Street, just off Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly Circus, that Mr. W. F. Goldberg, much more familiar as

"Shifter" of the *Sporting Times*, on Wednesday, 19th January, 1887, began his venture.

Prior to that, certain sons of the morning, and other lights of leading, possessed of a rooted antipathy to going to bed on the same day on which they had arisen, had been wont to foregather at the Adelphi Club in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, a place better known as "The Spooferies," and this having served its purpose so far as they were concerned, and become a little bit tedious to many of them, it occurred to certain souls that something a bit better and more comfortable would in all probability be popular. Hence it was that in due season The Star came into being. Shifter was sole proprietor at first, but in a very brief space of time it became quite painfully clear to him that the meagre amount of capital at his disposal was quite inadequate for the carrying on of a club even for a brief period. Wherefore he sought about for a partner, and found him in Mr. Ernest Wells. The style and title of the club became The Pelican, and with a strong committee for a venture of the kind, the place restarted with greatly increased vigour, for even in those days what Mr. Wells did not understand about running a club was hardly worth any one's while attempting to teach him.

I said the committee was a strong one, and as its make-up gives a good indication of the sort of men the members were, and therefore saves a

deal of not specially useful description, I may as well give the list of them here. There was the Marquis of Queensberry—"Q" to his friends, Lord "Kim" Mandeville, afterwards Duke of Manchester, and father of the present Duke, Lord "Johnny" Churston, Lord "Ned" de Clifford, Sir John Astley, "The Mate" to all who knew him, "Archie" Drummond, at that time a Captain in the Grenadiers, The Hon. Dan, and the Hon. Clem. Finch, younger brothers of Lord "Joey" Aylesford, John Corlett "Master" of *The Pink 'Un*, David James the well-known actor, ever to be remembered for his Butterman in *Our Boys*, Walter Dickson, good fellow and good whip, familiar to many as "Dicky the Driver," Charlie Harris, younger brother of Augustus of Drury Lane, George Edwardes of the Gaiety, Bob Martin or "Ballyhooley" as he was more familiarly termed, Edward Solomon composer of *Billee Taylor*, and much else, and Arthur Roberts then at the very tip-top of his popularity.

With such a committee to guide the affairs of the club, and with a list of members which included all the bright young men about town at the time, most of the younger portion of the House of Lords, pretty well the entire list of officers of the Household Brigade, all the best known and cheeriest artists, actors, authors, and sportsmen, it may be readily supposed that the days and nights at the Pelican Club were

exceedingly merry and bright. And they were !

In those days there was a good deal more liquor going than latterly, an extraordinary amount of hospitality, and what no doubt tended to liven things up a lot, was the fact that just about then quite a remarkable lot of young men had come into fortunes, and were as full as they well could be of a desire to get rid of them as speedily as possible. The belief actually held good among many, that it was a deal better to give than to receive, and such as had not got much "root of all evil" of their own to let slip, were at least replete with sympathy for their more prosperous fellows who had ; and so things went along cheerily, for most of us were young, and very fit, and the World was a rosy place generally.

Boxing shows were of the attractions offered to the Pelican members, and the chief of these used to occur on Sunday nights, although later on, the big night of the week became that of Saturday. A special committee looked after these shows, and on it were Lord Lonsdale, the Marquis of Queensberry, Sir John Astley, Colonel G. M. Fox, Mr. B. J. Angle, Mr. George Vize, and others, while the Boxing Manager was Mr. John Fleming, who when he ceased to be connected with the Pelican, had a good deal to do with starting the National Sporting Club in Covent Garden. At the Pelican, although sundry fairly big and costly

glove-fights were brought off, boxing was never regarded with the seriousness with which it is treated at the National Sporting, where it is of course the be-all and the end-all of the Club's existence. At the Pelican it was quite a side-show, and many of the members never took the trouble to look at the matches.

Poor "Shifter," who was a most humorous writer and in many ways an excellent companion to cheer things up a lot, was somehow not a success as a partner in a business concern, and after all that is what the Pelican Club was, or was intended to be by Mr. Wells, who soon came to the conclusion that Willie Goldberg and he would get on much better together if the connection between them was entirely one of friendship, and so he suggested to his partner that he should allow himself to be bought out. Nothing would please Shifter better he said, but how much was "Swears," as Mr. Wells was and is known, disposed to pay?

Shifter's first idea was, I believe, that they should toss whether Swears paid him a thousand pounds or nothing for his share, but "Your Old Proprietor" thought otherwise, and after a deal of discussion it was decided to submit the matter to arbitration, "Ballyhooley" Martin and John Corlett agreeing to decide the question on condition that one or other of the parties—they were not particular which—should stand luncheon at

Romano's. In the end the arbitrators after about a couple of minutes' consideration came to the conclusion that if Swears paid Shifter £500 ready, he would be acting very generously.

The "monkey" was duly handed over in notes, and Shifter's lady housekeeper hearing of the matter suggested that it would be wise if she retained half the money for safety's sake. "For," said she, "it won't do for you to go round the town with all that money in your pocket, Willie."

It was just as well that Shifter kept £250 of his coin, for when he got home in the early hours of next morning, he found a note on his dressing-room table. It was to the usual effect, that the lady had decided to leave him for ever, and that she had—gone. The £250 had gone too, but Shifter was far too good a philosopher to bother much about either the money or the damsel. "She might have taken more," he said, "and you know she might not have gone herself. There are compensations in everything if you only know where to look for them." And so there are.

After a time of considerable success and continuous growth, it became evident to Swears that unless the walls of the Denman Street premises could be reconstructed of indiarubber, it would be needful to find a new and greatly enlarged home for his members. This took a vast deal of





A Merry  
and  
a Happy New Year  
with all kind wishes  
from  
Sweers  
on  
The Petrouch  
Hiding Short

MR. ERNEST WELLS, PROPRIETOR OF THE FAMOUS PELICAN CLUB



doing, but ultimately in Gerrard Street he erected the extensive building which is now the well-known telephone exchange.

The new Pelican premises were large and handsome. The chief room as you entered was adorned with a long handsome bar which extended just about the entire length thereof. In this room we lunched, dined, and supped at little tables surrounded by a nice collection of inspiring pictures, cases containing stuffed pelicans performing a variety of weird antics and things, while on a special table under a glass case, reposed a large pair of rather grubby looking boots. They were those which Jem Smith, then champion boxer of England, had worn in his match with either Greenfield or Jake Kilrain. An extraordinary parrot occupied a pride of place at one end of the bar, and talked on occasion in a manner in which even at this lapse of time I blush to recall. Among the other club pets were the three bulldogs "Jem Smith," "Dumb Jack," and "Sister Mary." They were each of them valuable animals, and used to win no end of medals and cups and things, to the great satisfaction of the members. Upstairs above the main room, was the theatre where the extraordinarily good smoking concerts used to take place, concerts with lists of performers of literally world-wide celebrity, whose combined charges, if they had been singing and playing for regular money, instead of merely to

amuse themselves and their friends, would have amounted to untold gold.

Higher up still were the bedrooms of certain heroes who were so attached to the club that they couldn't leave it either by night or day, and so made it their permanent abode. The redoubtable "Hughie" Drummond was of the number.

It was down below the restaurant, or chief room, that the holy of holies existed, for there the gymnasium was, and the boxing-shows took place, and some celebrated history-making combats occurred there, being watched by audiences consisting of many of the best-known men in the country—men either celebrated at the time, or who have since achieved celebrity in pretty well every walk of life you can think of.

There is no harm in telling here, and at this time, that King Edward was our guest on at least one occasion when he was Prince of Wales, and when he left said that he had thoroughly enjoyed his visit. He would have come oftener no doubt, but fear of shocking the "Unco guid" kept him away. And in this connection, on the night he was to be present those of us who were journalists—there were only some five or six journalistic members—were asked to give our words of honour that we would not allude to the visit in our papers. All the Englishmen kept their promises. I am sorry to say, however, that the London correspondent of a great New York

journal failed to keep his, with the result that the paper in question came out with a sensational front-page article, with great scare headlines, and the wretched thing was copied over here and was made no end of a fuss of by the long-faced section of the Press, to the great annoyance of the Prince, and at least to the equal anger and disgust of his Pelican hosts who were sick with shame that one of their number should thus so lamentably have failed to play the game. Of course the member who had thus betrayed his trust ceased to be of the fold soon after. But the evil had been done by that time and the Prince regretted that it would not be possible for him to come again.

A conspicuous piece of furniture which could not fail to catch your eye in the main room of the club as you entered, was a chair of enormous proportions. It was of a size quite capable of seating three ordinary men, and on a silver plate attached to the back of it was inscribed the legend "Fatty's chair," indicating that it was the special property of Mr. Stephen Coleman, a sportsman of quite extraordinary girth, known very well, not merely in the club, but all over London at that time, as "Fatty Coleman."

Another of the club ornaments which I must say I never failed to look at without a certain measure of sorrow, was a case lined with purple velvet and silver, which contained the long white ends of a waxed moustache and imperial, which

had originally graced the upper lip and chin of fine old Major Bob Hope-Johnstone, who in his earlier days had covered himself with glory, if not with wealth, in the service of her late Majesty Queen Victoria.

"The Major" as he was always called and celebrated in song—do you remember "That's what's a matter with the Major," written, I fancy, by "Pot" Stephens and composed by Teddy Solomon?—was an old man when I knew him, but even then he was a grand looking sportsman, well over six feet high, with fine shoulders, and deep chest.

He distinguished himself greatly in China, and was in fact the first man to enter Peking, and was also at the ever-memorable Relief of Lucknow.

He met with a curious accident while coaching which might well have ended the careers of a dozen younger men, for in driving under the railway bridge at Brondesbury his head came in contact with it, and the top of his skull was literally lifted off. Of course he ought to have died several times over; but he just didn't. Nor did he peg out on the occasion when a gang of Haymarket ruffians set upon him with broken tumblers in their hands, and with the jagged edges of the glass inflicted terrible injuries on his head and face, though not before at least two of his assailants had gone down with injuries from the effects of which, it is satisfactory to know, they never recovered.

He was descended in the direct line from the Johnstones of Annandale, the Head of the house on one hand, and Sir Frederick Johnstone on the other, each claiming the Marquisate, but the House of Lords did not grant the claim to either.

The poor old chap was at times very imprudent, and on one occasion was so hard-up, that he sold his famous moustache and imperial to Lord Esmé Gordon for five pounds, it being part of the bargain that Esmé should cut them off himself. This was duly done, and "The Major" was so horrified at his altered appearance, that he said, "Good heavens, Esmé, make it a tenner and you can have my head as well!"

I suppose it was all funny enough, and the happening certainly created a deal of hilarity, but for my single self I could not help feeling uncommonly sorry and a good deal ashamed. It did not seem right that this fine old soldier should have been made a fool of in the way he was. However, as "The Major" didn't seem to mind much himself, I suppose it was nobody else's business.

Like many of the members, some of the servants of the club were remarkable characters, and numerous amusing stories were told of them. Most of them were old soldiers, and some of them were remarkably useful with their fists and very competent to keep undesirable intruders outside, and on nights when there was a boxing show of

special interest, there were always a lot of people who wanted to come in, whom we wanted particularly to keep out.

And talking of the servants in connection with boxing, one recalls the small Pelican page-boy who, seeking to better himself, sought service at the Athenæum, which as everybody knows is probably the most serious and solemn club in town. The steward thereof put the lad through his paces and asked him a number of questions, which he answered in so satisfactory a manner, that a job was promptly offered to him then and there.

But that was too one-sided an arrangement for the Pelican boy. He wanted to know things also, and duly asked, like Miss Rosa Dartle, for information, and learning to his great amazement and disgust that there was no boxing at the Athenæum on Sunday nights, promptly declined the situation, and returned to the Pelican, confiding to the head-waiter there that he had decided to remain in Gerrard Street as "At the Athenæum they were no class!" I told the story to the late Bishop of Winchester some time later, and he, a member of the Athenæum, was greatly impressed by it.

At one time a number of the Pelicans took quite seriously to coaching, and either possessed themselves of four-in-hands, or acquired shares in coaches, driving them so many days a month and paying very stiffly for so doing. These were the days when the head-quarters of the coaching



brigade were the White Horse Cellars in Piccadilly, where Hatchett's now is, and one of the most memorable happenings in connection with that remarkable period was when someone—I forget who exactly—during the Ascot meeting layed a thousand to five hundred pounds that a coach could not be driven from London to Brighton and back in eight hours.

Jem Selby, a professional coachman of the time, a considerable public character, and a sort of high priest of the Pelican coaching-set, was duly backed to do the deed, and on a memorable morning, July 13th, 1888, to be precise, he started off from the White Horse Cellars at 10 o'clock in the morning having as passengers "Dicky the Driver" Dickson, "Hullo there!" Carlton Blyth, Mr. McAdam, "Partner" Beckett, Bob Cosier, and "Swish" Broadwood.

In spite of bearing such a crew, the coach duly reached the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton, at four minutes to two o'clock, amidst the cheers of a vast crowd of sportsmen, many of whom had come down by train on purpose to witness the arrival.

There was no delay at Brighton, the coach being turned round at once, and the return journey begun. Thanks in great measure to the admirable manner in which the traffic was kept out of the way in London, the White Horse Cellars were duly reached with just ten minutes to spare, the

there-and-back journey having been thus accomplished in seven hours and fifty minutes, which still remains—and is likely to continue to do so—the coaching record for the drive.

Half London was in Piccadilly to see Selby pull up, and when he did so there was a deal of enthusiasm and high spirits. Later on at the club, there were lots of spirits and enthusiasm as well, and the proper celebration of the event lasted well into the next day.

Some time later there was talk about Carlton Blyth, whose Piebald team used to be a familiar spectacle, attempting to lower Selby's record, but although there was lots of talk and considerable lowering of many things in connection therewith, the record remained where it had been placed, and I fancy it is likely to stay there for a long time to come, for in these days of motoring, coaching is as dead as Marley, or a door nail than which, as Dickens has proved to us, nothing can be deader.

## CHAPTER X

With regard to the future—The candidates' Book of the Pelican Club—A specially remarkable entry therein—The man who nearly made himself Emperor of the French—His sensational finish—The courtier who sought information from the band-master on behalf of Queen Victoria—A dreadful title—What the good Queen must have thought—The Victoria Cross—The Queen and the Highland officers—King Carlos of Portugal—A happy monarch—Clement Scott of *The Telegraph*—The famous interview which led to his downfall. How he tried to come back, and did so for a time. Success on the London stage—How it came to some lucky ones—Fame at a jump—Mr. Hayden Coffin's arrival—Others who became famous in one night—Miss Edna May and her first success among us—Brevity the soul of criticism.

**I**T is an old saying, and of course a perfectly true one, unlike so many of the ancient saws, that there is only one thing we can be perfectly certain of with regard to our future. How little any of us can see ahead—or even immediately in front of us, if it comes to that! How many of those who were generally looked upon as duffers in their and our early days, subsequently acquired merit, like Kim's Lama, and in some cases achieved really great things; how many, too, who started brilliantly, and looked to have the world before them, came to nothing at all—or something worse than that.

If you could see the Candidates Book of the

old Pelican Club, and I believe it is still in existence, you would find among many interesting entries, one which exactly goes to prove what I have written. It is that of a candidate whose name is hardly remembered now, but who was in his day quite as famous as say, Beecham's pills, or Pears' soap, for he was set forth as Ernest Boulanger, General, proposed by Hugh Rayner, better known in those days as "the bone twister," and seconded by Hugh F. Drummond, and the really interesting thing to my mind is, that under the heading "Profession or Occupation" appear the words which, ridiculous as they now are, seemed at that time quite likely to stand for truth, "Imperator in futuro."

Of course Boulanger was only a flash in the pan of French history, but he was a very big flash. Paris had lost her head about him, and had made him a sort of tin-god on at least ten wheels. For a few years he was the most talked of and written about man in the world. Then he was found out. His collapse came; he was down and out; and disappeared for all time after his very theatrical suicide on the grave of one of his many sweethearts in Paris.

If he could have seen a little way ahead I fancy, too, that fine old gentleman, Sir Henry Ponsonby, would not have been placed in the singularly unfortunate position he once was, through absolutely no fault of his own.

He was in attendance on good Queen Victoria one day at Windsor, and Her Majesty had strolled out on the terrace to listen to the very admirable and spirited music then being played by one of the Guards' bands. One tune in particular caught the Queen's attention and secured her special regard, and she sent a messenger to the bandmaster—perhaps he was Dan Godfrey, perhaps he wasn't—saying she would like the piece to be played over again. And the thing was done.

Ever mindful of little courtesies the Queen then asked Sir Henry to express her satisfaction to the bandmaster and to enquire the title of the melody, which had so won her approval.

I do not know what Sir Henry told the Queen on returning from his little errand, but it must have been distinctly difficult for even the most diplomatic courtier to explain to the First Lady of the land, as well as a Queen of some severity about many matters, that the air was that of a very popular music-hall song of the period, bearing the classic title "Come Where the Booze is Cheaper."

Writing of her who was known as "the dear Queen" reminds me of the Victoria Cross, a more familiar, though none the less distinguished emblem in these days than it used to be in the time of the Good Queen after whom it was named, and the last man to receive the grand award "FOR

VALOUR," at the hands of the venerable ruler, was my old friend Major Mauray Meiklejohn of the Gordon Highlanders, who came by his honour so heroically in the Boer War, and by his end so tragically in Hyde Park, during a Review, when his horse bolted with him and threw him over the railings.

Meiklejohn had lost an arm in action and was naturally badly handicapped on a very restive horse.

Queen Victoria had become very old and failing, and her sight was feeble; and so when Meiklejohn was summoned to receive his decoration at her hands, a brass curtain hook was sewn to the breast of his tunic, so that the Queen might fasten the cross on with as little difficulty as possible.

From what the hero told me, the occasion must have been a very painful one, for when he was ushered into the room where Her Majesty was waiting to receive him, seated in an invalid chair, the poor old lady was greatly overcome and broke down badly, moaning away more to herself than to anyone else, "Poor, poor boy; he's lost his arm; he's lost his arm, oh, the poor, poor boy."

Finally the Cross was placed in the venerable Queen's shaking fingers, and these were guided to the curtain hook, which after several painful failures was ultimately encircled, and as Meikle-



*Photo.*

*Mayall*

QUEEN VICTORIA AND PRINCE ALBERT  
IN THE EARLY SIXTIES





john said, it was all so sad and pathetic, that he came uncommonly near to crying himself.

It is pleasant to think of the good Queen Victoria under less sombre circumstances when all the world was younger, and when she could, and did laugh as heartily as any of her subjects ; for she had a very keen sense of humour, and if anything was really amusing, none could appreciate it more generously than she.

When the King or the Queen is in residence at Balmoral Castle, the Guard is always provided by a Highland Regiment, and on one occasion the two subalterns in charge of that furnished by the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, were connections of my own, though unrelated to one another. Both are dead ; one of them, a Brigadier, paid the great price in the recent war.

As usual Queen Victoria, who was always particularly kind to her Highland Guard, commanded the two lads to dine with her at the Castle, and naturally they were somewhat overcome and nervous about meeting their Sovereign for the first time, and as a result I have no doubt took a peg or two of the wine of their country to brace themselves up for what was something of an ordeal.

When they arrived at the Castle they were told that unhappily the Queen had acquired a slight headache and could not dine with them, but would receive them after dinner, which intelligence was, I doubt not, a relief to the two youthful warriors.

And so under the care of an equerry, they fed and did themselves very well indeed, thanks in great measure to the very persistent fashion in which the butler who attended on them saw that their champagne glasses were never allowed to feel lonely or empty.

When some time after dinner it was announced to the soldiers that the Queen would now receive them, it began to be borne in upon them that perhaps they had taken just a trifle too much courage on board ; however, there was nothing for it but to pull themselves together as well as possible, and pray for luck, strength, and guidance.

After being conducted along apparently interminable passages, possessed of singularly highly polished and slippery floors, a door was thrown open and they were ushered into a large room, the floor of which was of so highly polished a nature that it resembled a looking-glass. On a rug, near the fireplace, stood the great little lady, the Queen of Great Britain, much redder of face and much bluer of eye than they had conceived possible, waiting to receive them.

In front of her was a lesser rug, upon which it was clearly indicated those about to be presented to her were to stand. But the problem was, how the lengthy surface of extremely polished floor was to be overcome, before that haven of apparent stability could be reached. The taller of the twain strode forward as boldly and steadily as

might be, closely followed by the other. Then a tragic thing happened. He who led the way, seemed just past his difficulties, and in the act of placing his foot on the rug, when that treacherous thing slid across the polished floor, with the result that the kilted hero went down with a terrific thud on his back, with his legs whirling wildly in the air. His companion stooping to rescue him, was pulled down also, and there the pair were on the glassy floor, for some seconds which felt like hours, fighting their way on to their feet with indifferent success, crimson with shame and horror at the happening, while the good Queen gave vent to peal upon peal of laughter at the catastrophe, and those assembled about her joined in also, prior to helping the Highlanders to a more upright position.

Next day one of my relatives encountering a distinguished member of the Royal Household, besought him almost with tears in his eyes to say what he and his companion could do by way of apology to the Queen.

But that wise old gentleman retorted that everything was all right; that the Queen had been greatly impressed as well as entertained by their visit; and that Her Majesty had stated that, from what she had seen, she was of opinion that the old gist had just as fine men for its officers, as it had in earlier days, when the father of the contrite hero commanded the regiment.

Writing of royalty reminds me of the last time I saw King Carlos of Portugal alive, not many months before he and his elder son were so foully done to death in the streets of Lisbon.

It was in the huge circus of the place, about the size of our Albert Hall, and the very indifferent performance took place partly in the arena and partly on the stage at one side of the building immediately opposite the Royal Box, wherein sat the jolly looking King Carlos so full of smiles and hilarious spirits that it was obvious he had dined wisely, well, and in considerable quantity.

The programme was a poor one and suggested that of a fourth-rate music-hall, but the big audience stood it, and the plump cheery looking King was obviously quite delighted, and applauded some of the items so heartily that he looked as if he might readily enough over-balance himself and fall out of his box.

Towards the end of the programme before the finish was quite reached, I and my companion, the excellent skipper of the ship in which I had arrived, and was to sail to Las Palmas next day, left the circus, and in a side street we saw the King's carriage, drawn by four mules, waiting for him. Just then the monarch came out of what was evidently a private entrance, walking arm-in-arm with a gentleman who seemed to have a deal of trouble in supporting his rather plump and heavy sovereign.

If the King was in good spirits inside, he was in still better out, for as he came along he literally shouted with laughter, and appeared to be tremendously amused at something which had happened. Of course we took our hats off as he passed us, and King Carlos who was very English in his ideas and tastes, and keen about English people, waved his disengaged hand, which held a large cigar, to us in the most friendly fashion. He looked as if he was really pleased to see us, and quite conveyed the impression that very little would have made him ask us to come along to the Palace and have a drink with him.

When he reached the door of his carriage—which was small—there was considerable difficulty in packing the plump and cheery monarch into it, but the attendant courtier and a footman ultimately succeeded in doing what was required, and the last we saw of King Carlos was his still waving hand, from the carriage window, with the tightly clasped cigar in it. Surely never did man seem happier, or freer from care of every sort and kind.

When I next saw the King some months later, being again in Lisbon, the Revolution had taken place, and he was in his coffin in the Cathedral of St. Vicente. The upper portion of the coffin was of glass, and as you gazed at the fully dressed King, with his carefully brushed hair, and curled moustache, and pleasant expression of completely

peaceful repose, it was difficult to believe that he was other than asleep.

I don't know if the dramatic critics of the newspapers keep their jobs for a long time in these days, but during the thirty-odd years I was a member of the band they usually held on to them until they died, or till the papers they represented predeceased them.

Some of those who were experienced critics, when I was a youngster at the game, are still to the fore as if they were as enthusiastic about the Play as ever, and no doubt they are. Mr. William Archer, now of the *Star*, must be one of the senior working dramatic critics. He was for many years theatrical representative of *The World* when Edmund Yates ruled. I fancy, too, he was at one time, critic of the London *Figaro*, when the late James Mortimer was its editor, and I believe he was also critic of *Life* before Mr. J. T. Grein began dramatic criticism in its pages.

Although the late Mr. Nesbit was critic of *The Times*, Clement Scott of *The Daily Telegraph*, was the big man in the dramatic critical world, no doubt in considerable measure because the *Telegraph* dealt more fully with theatrical matters in those days than its competitors, and Scott's name was more familiar to the public than those of his fellow-scribes. His position was quite a remarkable one in its day; while other critics were given a stall, Clement, usually accompanied

by his wife, surveyed things from a box, being the only critic thus honoured. People used to read his notices after a dramatic production not so much to see what *The Telegraph* had said, but what Clement Scott thought about it.

Poor Scott's Waterloo arrived when the remarkable and still memorable interview in *Great Thoughts* made its appearance, wherein he said sundry very indiscreet things about the Stage and its womenfolk. The fact that a deal of what he stated was true, and a familiar thing to every man or woman about Town did not matter; the sword fell, and Scott got it, where according to the familiar legend the chicken got the axe. There was no end of a to-do about the interview, and Scott was suspended from *The Telegraph*. Poor fellow, he took the whole thing very much to heart, and said and wrote a good deal that was silly concerning it. An apology was demanded, and this for a long time Clement declined to give. I have a letter before me as I write wherein he stated most definitely that he would see the entire theatrical profession in Kingdom Come or elsewhere before he would apologise. One's opinion of his determination altered somewhat when he returned to his job on *The Telegraph* the following week, and apologised therein to a very considerable extent.

Most of the dramatic critics of my time have "gone on ahead," and one thinks of Moy Thomas,

Godfrey Turner—father of Mr. Leopold Godfrey Turner—Joep Slade, John Latey, Charles Carson, Cecil Howard, Joe Knight, Willie Wilde, Byron Webber, Jimmy Davis, "Pot" Stephens, George Spencer Edwardes, Newnham Davis, and Cecil Raleigh. Mr. Alfred Watson, for so many years critic of *The Standard*, is happily still to the fore, like Mr. Boyle Lawrence, Mr. Jevons, Mr. Ben Findon, Mr. Grein, Mr. William Mackay, Mr. Austin Brereton, Mr. Seaman, Mr. Edward Michael, and Mr. Chance Newton of *The Referee*, who were all members of the old gang.

As a rule success of any consequence on the London Stage comes only after considerable climbing, and very gradually, but one has known several outstanding instances of actors and actresses who jumped into quite front-rank fame the first time they were seen or heard in Town; a notable instance of this sort of thing being the manner in which Mr. Hayden Coffin of "Queen of My Heart" fame arrived, when *The Lady of the Locket* was produced at the Empire, sometime before it became a Variety Theatre.

Mr. Coffin had previously appeared in *Pocahontas*, but it was in the first-named piece that he was really heard, was seen, and certainly conquered London most successfully; and in the criticisms on the piece which appeared in the papers next day, the success he had scored the previous night was made secure indeed, for his



praises were sung to a very remarkable extent, and soon the whole town was talking of the new singer who had been discovered, and was coming to hear him accordingly.

A success of another sort, just as big in its way, and just as sudden, was that made by the late Charles Danby, who was for so long at the Gaiety, when he first appeared in London at the Old Strand Theatre, where the Strand Tube Station now is, in a revival of *The Sultan of Mocha*, wherein he played the principal comedy-part, that of Captain Sneak.

On the first night the actor came on, as they say in the theatres, "without a hand." No one knew him. He was an absolutely unfamiliar quantity to London playgoers, but after he had been on the stage for a couple of minutes, it was quite clear that a new comedian, well worth discovering, had come to London. Danby's success that night was wonderful; and next day the Press notices of the piece were all written round him. The critics to a man, declaring that so rare a bird as a really new and funny comedian, must take up his abode permanently with us in Town, and as many will remember he did so, for that most astute annexor of talent, George Edwardes, promptly secured him for the old Gaiety, and there he stayed for many a long year.

That very droll comedienne, Miss Louie Freear, who had such a vogue in London for some years,

had done much good work in the country before she made her remarkable success as the odd little maid-of-all-work in *The Gay Parisienne* at the Duke of York's Theatre, a success which later on led to her going to His Majesty's Theatre to play Puck in Sir Herbert Tree's great revival of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Miss Edna May's triumph on the first night *The Belle of New York* was played at the Shaftesbury, will be recalled, too, as another instance of how playgoers' favour may be secured at one jump, if the jump be of the right sort. Miss May was quite unknown in London when she made her first entry as the demure Salvation Army lassie. London knew all about her next day, and straightway took her to its capacious heart and kept her there till she retired from the stage soon after her marriage.

That brevity is the soul of wit is of course a familiar thing, and one believed in I doubt not, by all except "space writers" on the Press. Criticism, too, as a general rule probably loses nothing of its value by being a trifle abrupt at times.

There is in this London of ours a very well-known stage manager and producer of musical plays who need not be too closely identified here, but who has been concerned in the production of many great successes.

On one occasion he was invited to attend the

“reading” of a certain musical-comedy which was subsequently produced, with rather dire results to those who financed its appearance.

The reading duly took place at the Never-Mind-Which Theatre, and all those immediately interested in the production were present. He who held the book, did his reading to the best of his ability, and the popular actress who was to play the chief part in the piece explained the situations and gave suggestions from time to time.

At the end of the first act the polite Stage-Manager-Listener maintained the complete silence which had overwhelmed him shortly after the start of the reading, and when the end was finally reached, there was still no word, and everyone looked towards him and waited for his verdict.

He said nothing, however, and merely continued to gaze into space in a sort of stunned and amazed condition.

“Well, Mr. ——” said the reader, feeling that an expression of opinion of *some* sort was needful, “what do you think of the piece?”

And then the polite stage manager, suddenly coming to himself with a jerk, arose and spake the only syllables he gave utterance to all the time. “*You ought to be in a Home!*” he said, as he walked out of the theatre without another word.

## CHAPTER XI

The generosity of the theatrical profession—Concerning certain great healers and their remarkable kindness—Sir Morell Mackenzie and Kaiser Frederick of Germany—Lennox Browne, a warm friend of the Stage and a great throat specialist—What “Ell Bee” said about Sir John Bland Sutton—A strange coincidence—The working of Fate—Sir Frederick Treves—The value of personal appearance to a surgeon—Sir Alfred Fripp the famous operator, and kindly man—How some plays succeed and others fail—The remarkable difference between the opinions of London and the Provinces—Both good, but different—Van Biene and his *Broken Melody*—First night audiences and others—A threefold scheme—What Sir Arthur Pinero thought about it—Sir Arthur Pearson and his wonderful work for the blind—The good he has done for his fellow-sufferers—His remarkable early days—The start of *Pearson's Weekly*—How he left *Tit Bits* office to accomplish it—The series of miracles which occurred—How Sir William Ingram helped—The start of *The Daily Express*—The purchase of *The Standard*.

**P**ROBABLY the members of no single profession have been, and are, less backward in coming forward to do good turns when such were, or are, desired and deserved, than those connected with the Theatre. And if actors and actresses have repeatedly proved themselves the most kindly-hearted and generous of people, if they have done much for others, as they unquestionably have, they have had a good deal done for them in return, notably by members of the great healing craft.

No doubt the wealthier actors and actresses who call upon the services of great physicians and surgeons, have to pay for them, as they certainly ought to, but one knows of many services rendered by the most eminent medical men to humble members of the Stage, without the smallest fee or reward, other than very grateful thanks.

In a profession where the voice is the chiefest asset, throats and all pertaining to them are matters of great importance, and the extraordinary kindness of the most eminent throat specialist of his day, Sir Morell Mackenzie, to members of the theatrical calling, is still remembered with very grateful feeling.

Mackenzie, who, it will be remembered, was specially sent to Germany to operate on the throat of the Emperor Frederick, father of the latest Kaiser, was a good head and shoulders above any other throat doctor of his time. Every moment of his day could have been occupied over and over again by people willing to pay vast fees for his services, and yet he never failed to make time, somehow or other, to attend to any suffering actor or actress, and he never took one farthing from them for all he did. He was keenly interested in the Stage, and used to be a very regular first nighter, while his son, Harry Morell, became an actor for a time, prior to entering upon management in company with Mr. Frederick Mouillot. At one time Morell and Mouillot were very big

people in the theatrical world, controlling several theatres, as well as some fifteen or seventeen touring companies.

When Sir Morell Mackenzie died, the Theatre's great throat friend became Lennox Browne, and in spite of the numerous calls on his services by suffering humanity, he also found time to take the throats of actors and actresses under his charge, and saving in certain exceptional cases his sole reward was the gratitude of the innumerable men and women whom he cured, in many cases, by important operations.

Lennox Browne was a very wealthy man, for his practice was an extensive one, and his fees from those who could afford to pay them were considerable, but his kindness to poorer members of the Theatrical Profession, in whose calling he was always keenly interested, was remarkable, and I could readily tell of many cases wherein his generosity was by no means confined to the free giving of his skill. He was a generous and kindly man, and "the Profession," as it used to love to call itself, lost a very good friend when the sage of Mansfield Street died.

On a certain first night at Drury Lane, many years ago, I sat next to Lennox Browne, who during the performance regaled me with a most vivid and gory account of a specially dreadful operation which he had seen performed that day by a young surgeon, whose work was then begin-

ning to attract attention. As he became enthusiastic in his dreadfully realistic account of the happening, "Ell Bee" talked quite loudly, to the immense indignation of those who sat near us, and finally, as my hair was beginning to stand on end with horror at what I was hearing, I besought him to stop, unless he wanted to make me physically ill. "All right," he said, "I was forgetting, but just let me tell you this, that if ever you want to be cut up in little pieces, and then stuck together again as good as new, you get this new fellow Bland-Sutton to do it, for as an operator he is a marvel."

Years afterwards, I told my good friend, Sir John Bland-Sutton, the famous surgeon, the story, and he was interested. It is something of a coincidence, surely, that it should have fallen to Sir John to have to tell poor Lennox Browne of the fatal nature of his illness.

Personal appearance is always an important matter to anyone, and of what infinite value must a good cheery presence and manner be to a doctor or surgeon? How absolutely like the real thing Sir Frederick Treves must have seemed to his patients when he came to operate on them, and how confident they must have felt in his abilities to do all that was possible.

Another eminent surgeon, whose physical presence and manner must be among his most valuable assets, is Sir Alfred Fripp. If the time ever came

when one had to have one's head taken off, or anything of the kind, surely the big, kindly, strong, cheery, wonder-worker of Portland Place is precisely the person one would desire to do the deed. I leave great skill and absolute knowledge of his own terrible game out of the matter, and refer only to the hearty hopeful manner, so sure that there is nothing very much the matter, and so certain that even if there is, it can, and will, all be set right, which works such wonders with the patients of Sir Alfred, big alike to look at and in reputation, whose appearance and "out-of-doors" air always seemed to me to suggest an especially clever-looking admiral of the younger sort.

Like so many other really distinguished members of his own and other callings, notably that of the Bar, Sir Alfred Fripp is a very regular first nighter at the Theatre, and few plays of any consequence are produced in Town, without his cheery presence in the stalls.

It takes all sorts to make a world, we know, and it is just as well, in the interests of morality and other matters, that we don't all think alike about everything. But as poor Bertram, the remarkable conjuror was wont to remark, "Isn't it wonderful" how tastes differ in the matter of plays? Any playgoer, possessed of even limited experience, can readily enough recall pieces which failed to achieve success when produced in London,



but which did exceedingly well in the country, and in America, and *vice versa*.

Take, for instance, the case of *A Little Bit of Fluff* which was so great a success in London, which was equally triumphant in the country, and which failed lamentably in America.

The piece was produced in New York, with a considerable amount of booming, as was only natural after its London triumphs, and yet it lasted exactly, and precisely, for one week—no more and no less—while some of the American dramatic critics appeared to marvel that it had even existed as long as that !

Then there was *The Boomerang*, produced by so successful a manager, and so keen and experienced a judge of what ought to suit the London public, as Sir Alfred Butt, who thought so much of the piece when he saw it during the second year of its run in New York. But the London public would not have it ; stayed away from the theatre where it was being given in vast numbers, and as a result, the piece shortly afterwards ceased to be.

A still more remarkable instance of how the theatrical fare of some folks is the absolute poison of others, was the famous case of *The Broken Melody*, produced by Mr. Van Biene, the eminent 'celloist, at the Prince of Wales' Theatre.

The piece was not a success on its first night ; was a good deal hit about by the critics ; and its London career was of the briefest.

Undismayed by this Mr. Van Biene took his play and his 'cello on tour, and played both for many years in the country to remarkable business, so that *The Broken Melody* came to rival *East Lynne* in provincial favour.

Then Van Biene thought the time was ripe to show the piece to London once more, now that it had been acclaimed by thousands of playgoers, and had become an undoubted financial success. So he reproduced it at the Old Princess' at Oxford Street, Wilson Barrett's former home, and as no doubt many will recollect the result of so doing, was disastrous, and the play's failure quite remarkable.

Then Van Biene took his property back to the country, where it was once more received with open arms, and a fresh fortune was added to those already made by it. All of which is very curious, and goes to show how greatly the taste of playgoers varies in different places.

For my humble self I have always thought that a dramatic author ought to write three versions of his play. The first for the opening night in London, when the audience is for the greater part a professional one, which goes to the theatre on no other occasions than first nights, and when even every boy in the gallery is a keen critic. The second version would be for subsequent London performances, when the audiences are composed of ordinary playgoers, who only occasionally

visit the theatre ; and the third for the country, which as a rule regards things differently from London, and while no doubt provincial audiences are just as keen, as just, and as critical as London ones, it is a fact that they like plays and players whom Londoners do not seem to take to, and *vice versa*.

I remember suggesting the three-version play idea to so experienced a dramatist as Sir Arthur Pinero, and he quite agreed that there might be a good deal of sound sense in what at first sight seemed rather like the reasoning of the Mad Hatter of " Alice in Wonderland."

Another sound judge of many matters, who approved of my three editions' idea, when I put it before him, was my old friend Sir Arthur Pearson, whose magnificent work on behalf of his fellow-sufferers from blindness is known to everyone. If he had never done anything other than the founding of his grand institution for blinded soldiers at St. Dunstan's in Regent's Park, where our maimed heroes are comforted, nursed back to health and spirits, taught trades suitable to their handicapped conditions, and re-started in life, Sir Arthur Pearson's name would deserve to rank very highly in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen and women.

But he has done more than that, for the admirable Fresh Air Fund for the poorest children, which has brought untold happiness into the lives

of thousands of the most poverty-stricken little ones in the land, was his creation, and he had much to do with the spreading of Tariff Reform, Mr. Chamberlain's last and greatest scheme, for the benefit of his fellow-countrymen.

It was Mr. Chamberlain who described Sir Arthur as "the greatest hustler I have ever known," and the title was well deserved, for he was ever the keenest and most enthusiastic of workers at any duty or task he took in hand. Indeed, as is generally known, Pearson lost his precious eyesight in great measure through working far too hard.

And talking of Mr. Chamberlain who, till his fatal illness fell upon him, was one of the most remarkably youthful looking men, for his years, of our time, and who always managed to seem so fit and well, on the only occasion I was privileged to meet him at a small luncheon party of three at the National Club in Whitehall Gardens, I ventured to ask him how he contrived in his tremendously busy life always to look so wonderfully in the pink, and I shall ever remember his remarkable answer, as he regarded me fixedly through the ever-present eyeglass, "By drinking a great deal of port, and taking no exercise."

I don't know if the great man really did favour that excellent, if very gouty wine, to any special extent, but I do know that the taking of no exercise at all to speak of, was a fact.

Sir Arthur Pearson's later life we all know, of course, but his earlier days were just as notable in their way.

He was a son of an Essex clergyman, had just left Winchester, and was casting about for something to do, when he read the particulars of a competition which was about to be started in the weekly paper *Tit Bits*. He entered for this competition, the first prize for which was a clerkship in the office of Sir George Newnes, proprietor of the paper, at a salary of £150 a year, and out of many thousands of contestants, he won it. That was an extraordinary feat in itself.

After he had served in *Tit Bits* office with success for some time, the manager of the place was taken ill, and young Pearson, walking into Sir George Newnes' room suggested that he should be given the position. Newnes, who was at times a man of somewhat hasty temper, nearly had a fit at what seemed to him the audacity of the idea, but on Pearson hastening to add that he merely desired to prove he was worthy of the post, and that until he did so to Sir George's satisfaction he would expect no increase of salary, he was graciously allowed to take over the immensely extended duties.

He carried these out with the greatest success for four years, and at the end of that time once more bearded the lion in his den, and in very brief and spirited fashion, suggested that he

should now be made Sir George's partner ! At this Newnes, I have been told, really very nearly did collapse, and would not hear of the matter. "If you cannot see your way to make me a partner," said Pearson, "I shall have to start a paper of my own in competition with *Tit Bits*."

"Have you any idea," said Newnes, "what capital you would require to do anything of the kind ?" "Yes," retorted Pearson, "with care and economy it can be done with £10,000."

"And have you got 10,000 shillings ?" asked the *Tit Bits* chief. "No, I haven't," was the answer, "but I am going out now to get it," and with that he left the office.

It was then that a series of veritable miracles happened one after another.

When he left Southampton Street, Pearson was quite undecided whom he should favour by permitting him to find £10,000 for his future venture. He knew of Sir William Ingram, by name at least ; knew that he was chief proprietor of *The Illustrated London News* and other papers, and recalled the fact, that, like himself, Sir William was an old Winchester boy.

And so he entered the office of the oldest of the illustrated newspapers and asked to see Sir William.

Now even in those days, Sir William Ingram did not come to his office, by any means, every

day, and on such days as he attended there were naturally many important engagements to be kept, and many equally important callers by appointment for him to see. Without an appointment, it was naturally impossible to see the chief.

"You have an appointment of course," said the clerk to whom Pearson had spoken. "What name?" "Pearson," was the reply. The clerk, who evidently did not hear quite distinctly, looked down his list of appointments, and read the name of one Leeson, who had an appointment, said, "All right," and showed Pearson into the presence.

You may be quite sure that Mr. Chamberlain's "greatest hustler" lost little time in telling his story, and trotting out his project as rapidly as possible, giving the greatly astonished baronet no time to interrupt him, until the climax of the tale was reached, wherein it was suggested to him, that he would be doing himself no end of a good turn if he would agree to find £10,000 for the paper Pearson proposed to start!

Sir William was never a pale man; indeed, you would probably have described him as one possessed of ruddy colour, but on the occasion in question, I am given to understand he turned positively purple.

"Let me understand things," said he at last. "Do I take it that you, a perfect stranger to me,

believe that I will find £10,000 for a scheme which seems to be quite devoid of the elements of success—or is all this a very ill-timed joke? ” Pearson answered him that the proposition was an immensely serious one. “ Then all I can say is,” said Sir William, “ that I absolutely decline to have anything to do with it,” and the discomfited Pearson, picking up his hat, prepared to leave the room.

Then the third of the miracles happened. As he arose from his chair, Providence, or some other agency, prompted him to say something about this being rather a rough way to treat an old Winchester boy.

“ What was that you said about Winchester? ” said Sir William, always keen about anything and anyone connected with his old school. “ Were you there? In whose house were you? Sit down for a minute.”

Pearson sat down; and remained down for about two hours. At the end of that time Sir William Ingram had agreed to find the money to start *Pearson's Weekly*, and Sir George Newnes' late manager returned to Southampton Street, to pick up his greatcoat, incidentally to tell his former chief that his new partner was one of the best-known newspaper proprietors in England, and you may readily imagine that the *Tit Bits* magnate was anything but pleased to hear the tidings.



*Pearson's Weekly* was a success from its start, and Sir William Ingram, it is satisfactory to know, did very well indeed out of his investment. Afterwards came *Pearson's Magazine*, and many subsequently weekly papers, also in time Sir Arthur started the *Daily Express*, and likewise acquired *The Standard*, which latter purchase, however, he no doubt regretted. His unfortunate eye trouble put an end to his daily newspaper work, but he still remains chairman of the big newspaper-owning company which bears his name.

It is curious and rather interesting to recall here how some men who have succeeded abundantly in various walks of life got their starts, and as an instance of how a very small circumstance attended the beginning of the career of a very well-known novelist of the present day, let me tell the following :—

When my old friend John Latey succeeded Mr. Clement Shorter as editor of *The Sketch*, that gentleman having moved on to Great New Street to start *The Sphere* and later on *The Tatler*, he found himself in want of an assistant, and believing that I knew a good deal about the man he had in his mind for the job, he called upon me one day to ask me about him.

The man in question, though a very good journalist in many ways, was quite unsuited for the sort of work which I knew Latey would require of him, so I told my good friend exactly what I

thought, and gave my reasons for the opinion I had formed.

Latey quite agreed with me that his first idea was not a good one, and said he was very glad he had had a chance of discussing the matter. "I think," said he, "I will now settle with a very nice and likely young fellow named Bell whom I have seen. He is an Oxford man, and like yourself the son of a clergyman. He has not had very much journalistic experience so far, but he gives me the impression that he will be all right."

"The young fellow named Bell," was duly engaged and became assistant editor of *The Sketch*, and proved so very much all right that when John Latey died, he became editor in chief of the paper, later on dramatic critic of the *Daily Mail*, and a famous novelist also, for he is the well-known author and playwright who under the name of Keble Howard has written so much that is interesting and charming.

Of course Keble Howard would have got on no matter how he had started, but if it had not been for the little conversation which Latey and I had, he would not, in all human probability, have succeeded in precisely the same way; all of which goes to prove that very small matters push the accomplishment of our destinies one way or the other.

## CHAPTER XII

What a well-known player said—Her advice to budding actresses—Lady Orkney at the Gaiety and elsewhere—The Sisters Gilchrist—"The Little Grattans"—Mr. Harry Grattan's early experiences—How luck comes to some—And how others refuse her advances—Colonel North and Nunthorpe's City and Suburban victory—A long-priced winner—Sir Joseph Lyons and the start of a great business—A lost opportunity—The real beginning of the great Lyons concern—How a single song made a singer—The story of "Far, Far Away"—Miss Lottie Collins and her "Boom-de-ay" success—Mr. Arthur Roberts and his zebra bathing suit—His philosophical dresser—The smart restaurants of the time—Those who controlled them—The passing of the famous bars—"Captain Criterion of London"—Romano and his presentation loving cup—His very sudden death—Miss Gladys Cooper's first supper party—Gaiety girls who got on—Nellie Farren's reason for never quarrelling with a chorus girl—Very sound advice.

**A** VERY well-known actress who achieved great artistic as well as financial success, and who came from comparatively humble beginnings, has left it upon record, that she who would succeed upon the stage should shun the chorus. To become a member of the chorus is, according to the lady, to stop there, in nine cases out of ten, and her advice to beginners is, that some sort of part, however small, in some sort of company, however humble, should be tried for.

It is admitted of course that there are instances

—many of them—wherein actresses who began their careers in the chorus came to greatness in the theatrical world, became leading ladies and even actress-manageresses, but as a rule, our authority says to those who seek her advice, “Shun the chorus.”

She may be right ; certainly her experience entitles her to respect, but—well, there are lots of “buts” about the matter. And, by the way, let me here correct an error which has frequently found its way into print. It has been recorded of Lady Orkney, familiar to old time Gaiety patrons as Miss Connie Gilchrist, that she began her career in the chorus ; but this is incorrect, for she and her sister Marie used to dance at the music-halls as “The Sisters Gilchrist,” prior to joining the Gaiety Company.

Miss Connie Gilchrist's best dance was one performed with a skipping rope, that in which her sister Marie excelled being a species of Russian measure, performed in red Morocco top boots, and it was because of the success of her skipping rope dance that Miss Connie was engaged to appear in a children's pantomime at the Adelphi, by Mr. Chatterton. In this pantomime by the way, two of the leading parts were played by “The Little Grattans,” the said little ones being Miss Emilie and Mr. Harry Grattan, now so well known as the author of very successful revues and musical comedies.

The triumph of the Gilchrist skipping rope measure led in turn to its exponent being secured by John Hollingshead for the old Gaiety.

For a good many years Miss Gilchrist was one of the most admired, talked about, photographed, and paragraphed young women in London, as well as one of the chief attractions at the theatre wherein she appeared. In *The Sporting Times* and other journals, which devoted a deal of space to her sayings and doings, she was usually alluded to as "The Child," and a drawing of her formed part of the adornment of the front page of the brown paper cover of *The Bat*<sup>1</sup> each week.

And, by the way, mention of "The Little Grattans" recalls the fact that, although he is still a comparatively young man, Mr. Harry Grattan and his sister played the young Princes in *Richard III*, with Barry Sullivan, who although never at quite the top of the tree in London, was a tremendous favourite in the country, greater indeed in many towns than Henry Irving.

Mr. Grattan was for several years the understudy of Mr. Arthur Roberts at the old Avenue, and it was to a considerable extent, by the clever performances he gave in "The Gasper's" parts,

<sup>1</sup> A paper owned and edited by Mr. James Davis, much better known later on as "Owen Hall," author of *A Gaiety Girl*, *The Geisha*, *An Artist's Model*, and other very successful productions at Daly's Theatre, during the George Edwardes' period of management.

that he attracted special attention, got his chance, and took it.

And just as some people are fortunate enough to seize the opportunities which come to all of us—and are generally missed—with both hands, so do many of us absolutely push Fortune away, when she is trying to do us a good turn.

It seems a longish way back to the City and Surburban of 1890, but about a fortnight before the race, the one and only "Swears" told me he *knew* that Nunthorpe was going to win. I had even then suffered so severely from backing the "certainties" given me by various good friends, that I was somewhat sceptical, for I knew that the horse was Colonel North's, that his price was twenty-five to one, and that North's other representative in the race was L'Abesse de Jouarre who stood at something quite short—three or four to one, I fancy, and seemed likely to start at level money on the day of the race.

Moreover, North's commissioner had one day pulled "Swears" into a corner of the Pelican Club, and had, by way of doing him a turn, told him that L'Abesse was unquestionably the right pea for the event. In proof of this he showed "Swears" his betting book. By some mischance or other, he showed the eagle-eyed one a wrong page, for it was covered over with entries of bets about Nunthorpe, which seemed to make it reasonably clear that this was actually the horse

he hoped to win with. "Swears" with great good sense backed Nunthorpe for a large sum, and it will be recollected that his starting price was twenty-five to one.

Although "Swears" passed on the good news to me in the kindest way possible, I with hideous Scottish caution fearing that "Your Old Proprietor's" eyesight might have been playing tricks with him, only had a couple of sovereigns on, so that fifty pounds was all I made out of what was really the chance of a lifetime.

On another occasion I had a singular opportunity of doing myself some good, but being ever a poor gambler, with but small opinion of my own luck, I let the chance slip.

I was standing one day by the big bay window of the old Eccentric Club looking down on to Shaftesbury Avenue, when the late Sir Joseph Lyons came up to me and, pointing across the street, to the site of the very unfortunate Trocadero Music-hall, in the control of which so many people had lost fortunes, said, "You go about a good deal and know most of the restaurants in Town. What do you say to one just there?"

Now, I want you to recollect, before you condemn my reply, that Shaftesbury Avenue was then comparatively a new thoroughfare, that the old Troc. had been a positive dump-hole for considerable sums of money, and that Joe Lyons

himself was not specially flourishing at the time, having just had a somewhat disastrous season at Olympia, with the big *Constantinople* show, which came after the very successful *Venice in London* ; so I said, " Well, Joe, unless you are going to have some extraordinarily novel features about the place, I can't see that it will stand a chance. There is the East Room at the Criterion for smart people, there are Monico's and half a dozen other places close by for the lesser mortals. The whole neighbourhood is catered for."

" Then," said he, " you don't fancy the idea and you wouldn't care to be in it " ; and I said I did not, and wouldn't.

Now, as all the world knows, the Trocadero Restaurant was duly built, was started in a blaze of triumph, and has continued its remarkable success ever since, and out of that start came all the other innumerable Lyons' enterprises, each of which seems to have been more successful than that which went before it. And I had the chance of being in on the ground floor and would not take it ! Years afterwards I was glad to buy shares in the Company, paying a very stiff price for them, and dear old Joe, who was one of the kindest and most amusing of men, as well as one of the shrewdest I ever knew, never tired of chaffing me about my mistake.

Another case of lost opportunity was that of the seller of the song " Far, Far Away," with



which the late Slade Murray drew all London to the old Pavilion and elsewhere when he happened to be singing it, and which, when published, was sold by the tens of thousands of copies, all over the world.

Murray told me that he gave exactly one guinea for the song, which became worth thousands to him, in increased salaries and publishing rights. His acquisition of it came about this way. He was one day sitting in the Bodega in Chancery Lane, with the late Pat Feeney, the famous Irish songster of the time.

To Feeney there entered one, who producing a song from his pocket, besought the Hibernian vocalist to purchase it. Feeney did not want a new song at the time and said so, handing it over to Murray, who just glanced at it, pushed it into his greatcoat pocket, and gave the guinea asked for it, more out of good nature than for any other reason.

He did not look at the song again for some weeks ; in fact he forgot all about it, till one day, coming upon it by chance, he tried it over, thought the melody so taking, that although he did not fancy the words to any great extent, it seemed good enough to try at one of the halls wherein he was appearing at that time.

Well, he did try it at the old Trocadero, and it was so great a success that Slade Murray, who, at that time, was merely a fairly good second-rate

singer, became, for a period at least, the most popular comic vocalist in London.

After the success of "Far Far Away" was worn threadbare, Slade Murray went back in the betting as an attraction, and try as he would, he never could find another song to take its place, just as Miss Lottie Collins, mother of Miss José Collins of Daly's, who made so extraordinary a triumph with "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," that she had to sing it at the Gaiety as well as at about half a dozen music-halls a night, never found a legitimate successor to it.

It is said that few men are heroes to their own valets, and I fear few dressers hold the actors and actresses they help into and out of their things, in any very special regard. The fact is they get to know them too well, and we all know what too much "familiarity" as the shorter and stouter of these erstwhile philosophers of the music-hall, "The Two Macs" was wont to term it, will do.

Some years back, there was a happy time, when Arthur Roberts, the late "Mons" Marius, husband of that delightful singer, Miss Florence St. John, and my lowly self, used to take our early morning swim at Hobden's Bath, which was next to the Grand Hotel at Brighton, and one day Arthur invested in a remarkable bathing costume of black and white stripes.

The effect was quite excellent, and very well "The Gasper" looked in it, but by some evil



*Photo.*

*Alfred Ellis & Walery*

MR. ARTHUR ROBERTS



chance or other, the dye came off on his lily white skin, with the result that, in an undraped condition, he looked like an American convict clad in garments of superlatively excellent fit.

One evening, during the playing of *Joan of Arc*, then being given at the local and immediate Theatre Royal, I looked in at his dressing-room. The excellent comedian in those days, though generally a most amiable fellow, used at times to lose his temper with his celebrated dresser Frank if he was a trifle slow with one of his quick changes of costume. When I called, Roberts was on the stage, so Frank regaled me with light and sparkling conversation.

"How is Mr. Roberts to-night?" I asked, being painfully aware that there had been a somewhat large and lengthy luncheon party earlier in the day. "How is he," retorted the dresser; "how *is* he? You may well ask. Oh, Mr. Boyd, he's like this. He has the temper of a rhinoceros to-night, and as for his body—well *that's* like a ruddy zebra!"

Some little way back, I referred to the East Room of the Criterion, which, at one time, was quite the smartest feeding place in town, sharing favour in this regard with the Café Royal, and the Bristol in Cork Street, just opposite the office of the very well-known money-lender, Sam Lewis.

There was no Savoy, then, of course, no Cecil, Ritz, or Carlton, and the Berkeley as we know it

to-day did not exist. Verrey's, the Burlington, Epitaux, and the Solferino were popular, but in those days, Romano's was quite a small place, and more of a man's restaurant than anything else, though the female lights of the theatrical and music-hall worlds, were sometimes to be seen there.

The East Room was always controlled by famous restaurateurs, and though Mr. Paul Crémieu Javal—usually known as “Peter”—at one time secretary to Mr. Felix Spiers, one of the founders of Spiers and Pond, and anon managing-director of that firm, was understood to have had a deal to do with the creation of the place, Mella, later on of the “Star and Garter” at Richmond, was its first manager.

After him came Bertini, who certainly had a deal to do with making the East Room fashionable, and when he left to become the first manager of the Hotel Cecil, he was succeeded by Oddenino, who in turn after being at the Criterion, and fulfilling one or two engagements in Town and on the Continent, became manager of the Café Royal, prior to opening his own restaurant a little lower down in Regent Street.

When Oddenino left the Café Royal, Judah, who had followed Bertini at the Cecil, became manager of the famous Nicol Restaurant, and has remained there ever since. The very palmy days of the East Room were at the time when the

Langham and the Grand were considered the most modern and smartest of hotels. Luigi, so long manager of Romano's, and anon maître d'hôtel of Ciro's, has since his coming to the Criterion won back much of its erstwhile popularity.

One of the most paying portions of the Criterion and of its sister Spiers and Pond Restaurant, the Gaiety, was the vast bar, at which about twenty barmaids, specially selected young women of great physical attractiveness, were kept busily employed each day, till the place closed half an hour after midnight. Off the main bar room at the Criterion, was the American Bar, which achieved quite a deal of undesirable notoriety by reason of the "Boys" or "lads of the village" who used to assemble there, and find the place a very happy hunting ground.

During the time the American Bar was at the height of its fame—or otherwise—the "Great Macdermott" sang a song at the old Pavilion called "Captain Criterion of London," which made a considerable stir at the time, and led to an injunction of the ditty, which in those days there is no harm in telling was the work of Cecil Raleigh, at that time secretary of the Pelican Club, and later on the author of many very successful autumn dramas at Drury Lane.

Big bars, like those of the Criterion, the St. James', and the Gaiety, have been dead and gone

for some years past, while Romano's bar, Darmstatter's and the other places, famous in the ultra-alcoholic days, are things of the past.

The old Gaiety bar of course went when the old Gaiety Theatre ceased to be, while the New Gaiety Restaurant was not successful, and is now the abiding place of the Marconi Cable Company. The old Romano's, which was quite a tiny place, was burnt down, and then Romano, who was a very remarkable and amusing character, rebuilt the place very much as you see it to-day.

When the newly erected restaurant was complete, and after it had been going for some little time, a number of the representatives and partners of the great champagne houses gave "The Roman" a dinner of very fine and large dimensions, and presented him with a handsome silver loving cup.

Although Romano had lived for many years in this country, he never contrived to speak English in other than his own remarkable fashion. On the night of the banquet in his honour, seeing me among the guests, he clutched me by the arm and said, "Boyd Esquire, donta leave por ole Roman. You sitta nex me. You prompt when I maka da speech of tanks." And I did as I was asked.

"The Roman's" health was duly proposed at the end of the terribly long banquet, by one of the partners of a very famous champagne firm who came there specially to do the deed. He said



in course of his remarks, "We don't know how old Romano is, but we hope that he'll live till he's twice as old to drink out of this loving cup which I will now ask him to accept." And poor old Romano, who was by this time, very much overcome by emotion and things, lurched heavily against me, and gurgled "Boyd Esquire, if por ole Roman 'e live to be that age 'e be 'under-and-twenty-sixa."

That night after the place was closed Romano, feeling the heat, went for a walk in the Strand without his greatcoat. He caught a chill, and in less than a week he was dead.

It was after his death that Walter Pallant, George Edwardes of the Gaiety, Mr. W. Purefoy, the well-known race-horse owner, Colonel Newnham Davis—"The Dwarf of Blood"—of *The Sporting Times* and anon of *Town Topics*, formed a company to run the place under the style and title of Romano's Limited, and in their control the restaurant grew steadily in favour, and greatly improved in standing.

Romano's was always in close touch with the Gaiety, and the place was ever at its brightest and best at supper time after a Gaiety first night, when the management usually arranged for a special licence, and there was dancing and lots of harmless fun until the small hours.

For instance, after the first night of *The Girls of Gottenburg*, a big supper party was given by

Newnham Davis and someone else whose name I can't recall, which was attended by many of the charming ladies, who had delighted us on the stage earlier in the evening.

Among them was a very pretty and very young lady who was probably about sixteen or so. I am not sure if "her golden hair was hanging down her back" like the damsel in the song Mr. Seymour Hicks used to sing; but anyhow if it was up, it had only just been put up. She was Miss Gladys Cooper, at that time the bonniest of the Gaiety flappers, and she was attending her first supper party.

Since those days, Miss Cooper has gone ahead and done great things, and like all the young ladies who got a chance at more serious work than came their way at Daly's and the Gaiety, she took every advantage of the opportunities which came to her at the Royalty and elsewhere, and made very good indeed. Now, as everyone knows, she is an actress-manageress, in partnership with Mr. Frank Curzon, at the Playhouse, and is one of the best and most popular actresses of her own line in Town.

It is interesting, too, to note that the other outstanding young actress-manageress, Miss Marie Löhr, was also at one time of the George Edwardes fold, and appeared in an unimportant part in *The Little Michus* at Daly's, from which house so many other well-known actresses came, to name only

Miss Ethel Irving, and Miss Marie Tempest among the number.

Some of those who did big things after leaving the Gaiety and Daly's, began at one or other of those houses in the chorus, and all credit to them for getting on as they have done. In this connection one recalls the words of Miss Nellie Farren, an exceedingly shrewd woman as well as the best burlesque boy of her time—or perhaps of any other time—"I never quarrel with a chorus girl," she said, "she may be a manageress next week, you know." And the thing is true enough. It has happened.

## CHAPTER XIII

Something about Cecil Rhodes—Meeting him in Sir Starr Jameson's flat—A wonderful man—His remarkable opinion of the German Kaiser—How Mr. Rhodes signed his photograph—His long-drawn-out death—What he said to Jameson near the end—An indifferent musician—But an appreciative listener—Some eminent composers at their best—How I saved Sir Arthur Sullivan's life—Sir William Gilbert—A "Gentish" Person—Lewis Carroll—Golf stories—Music-making in strange places—How Ivan Caryll thought his fortune was made early in life—Miss Bessie Bellwood and the retort courteous—A remarkable cabman—A private recital by Paderewski to an audience of six—Bessie's opinion of Providence—How Mr. James Buchanan came to London—And how Sir Thomas Dewar followed his lead—Fortunes out of whisky—Spirits which you drink, and spirits which you see—The ghost at Glamis Castle—The story Lord Strathmore told—The subscription-seeking clergyman and the embarrassed spectre—How the ghost was effectively laid—Willing but impecunious—Frank Richardson the "Whisker" expert—My list of suicides—A sad and curious coincidence.

ONE of the biggest men in every way, I ever met, was Cecil Rhodes, and although a brother of mine was a close friend of the great South African, and for some years his political secretary, I only had the good fortune to see him once, and that was in Sir Starr Jameson's flat in Down Street, Piccadilly, where he lived when in London, with Sir John Willoughby and my brother Charles as his immediate neighbours.

Like almost everyone else I regarded Mr. Rhodes as a very great man indeed, wellnigh super-human in point of fact, but it was an expression of opinion which he gave vent to on the occasion I saw him, which made me wonder, if after all even the greatest of mortals could not make mistakes. Rhodes had been staying with the Kaiser in Berlin, and the Chief of the Huns had made a great fuss of him. An important person who was in the room at the time I allude to, said to him, in course of conversation, "Now tell me, Rhodes, is the Kaiser simply an egotistical ass, or a really big man?" and I remember well, how the South African turned his curious light blue eyes on the questioner, and becoming grave and serious as he did so, said in a very deliberate way, with a distinct pause between each word, "A very great man indeed!"

I was only a listener, of course, but in my heart I did not agree with Mr. Rhodes even then. Certainly he would have revised his opinion of the "All Highest," had he been alive to-day.

On that occasion—a memorable one to me—I had a photograph of Mr. Rhodes with me, his favourite picture, the familiar full-face bust portrait, and I ventured to ask him to sign it for me.

"Why on earth do you want me to do that?" he asked, with real surprise, and I told him that it would make the portrait of special value. "Do you know," he said, as he scribbled his name

across the photograph, "I don't think I ever signed my photograph before—I don't think I was ever even asked to do so."

In that case my treasured portrait must be the more valuable to-day, for of course he will sign no more of them now.

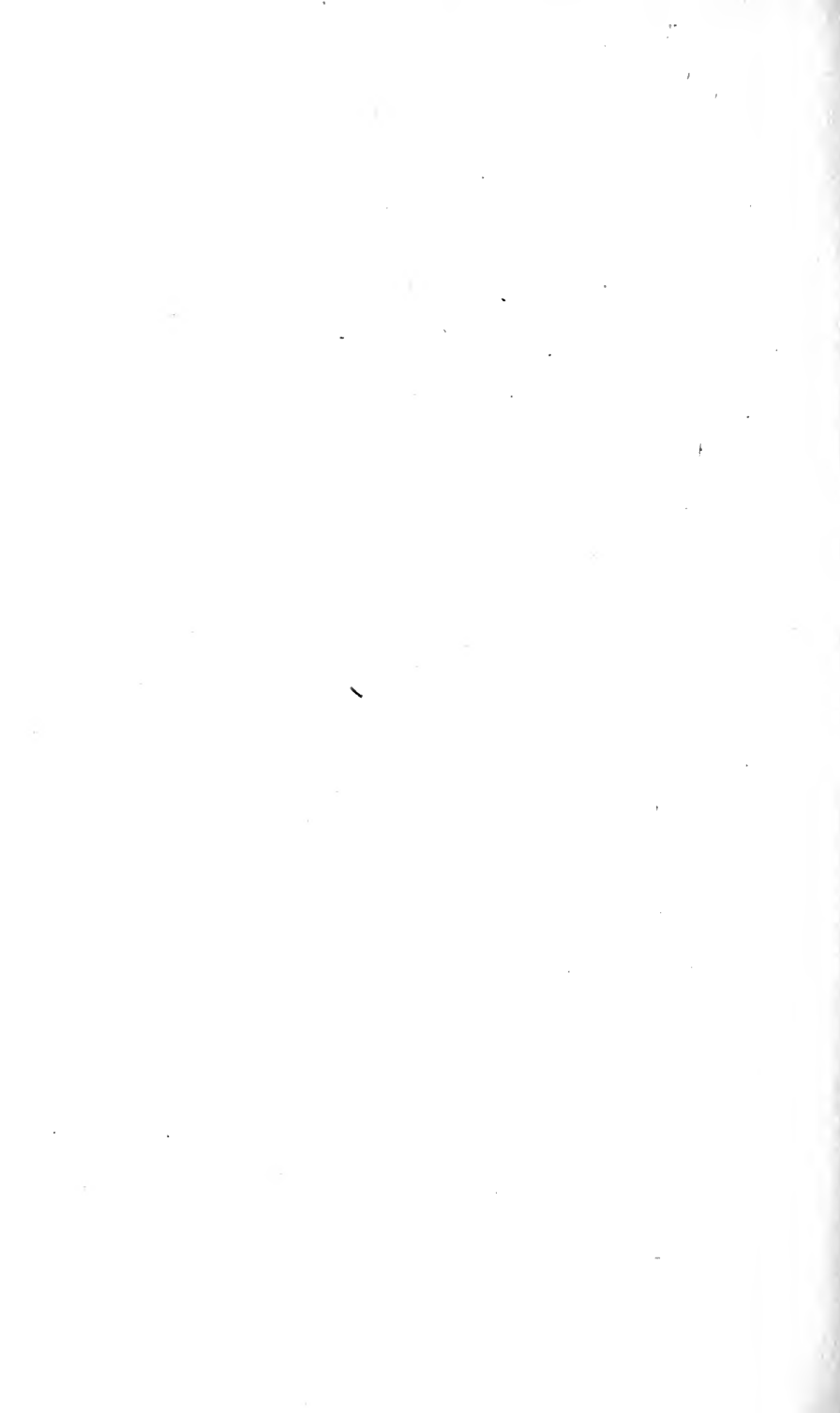
Some years afterwards, when Rhodes had gone to his last rest, in the wonderful Matoppos, Jameson, who was his closest friend, told me several things about his end, one of which there is no harm in repeating now.

The great man was dying for quite a long time, but he had much to tell Jameson of the work he desired to be carried on, and time was all too limited. One day, very near the end, when he was giving the future Prime Minister of South Africa numerous pointers, which he in turn was writing down, Rhodes, who was, as a rule, as devoid of sentiment as any man could well be, suddenly stopped, gave a sort of sob, and said, "I suppose you know, Jameson, what you have always been to me."

The reply was characteristic of Jameson. Time was short, there was much still to be told, and anything like a breakdown would have been fatal. Bringing his fist down hard upon a table Jameson cried, "Full stop, Rhodes!" and the dying man bowed his head, and said, "I beg your pardon," and straightway continued his business-like directions.



CECIL RHODES, THE GREAT EMPIRE BUILDER





Jameson was one of the gentlest, kindest, and best hearted men that ever lived. He was devoted in every way to Rhodes, but he knew his man and the right way to treat him in the circumstances, and he did it.

Although I am not much of a musician, being at best something like a twelfth or twentieth rate performer on the violin, I have always been devotedly attached to music, and I have had the good fortune to number several well-known composers of the lighter sort, among my friends.

Poor Alfred Cellier, composer of *Dorothy* and much else, was one of them, and in connection with him and his playing, I have always regretted my inability to write musical shorthand, if there be such a thing, for he composed so many charming pieces of all sorts, while I formed an appreciative and insatiable audience of one, and as these were not committed to paper, they were lost for all time.

Alfred used to be in his best composing mood about three in the morning at the old Pelican Club, and then I would lure him to the piano, and get him to play whatever came into his head, and according to my recollection some uncommonly fine things were created on those occasions, all unfortunately lost, simply because there was no one present to jot them down.

Sir Arthur Sullivan I did not know, but I fancy I saved his life on one occasion, some little time before his all too early death. We travelled one

day from Richmond to Waterloo in the same railway carriage, and at Vauxhall his manservant came to the door, as had evidently been arranged, and said "This is Vauxhall, Sir Arthur." "Oh, is it," replied the composer, "then I ought to get out here." But just then the train started; the servant bolted back to his own compartment, while Sullivan, gathering up some papers and a rug, and apparently quite regardless of the fact that the train was now moving rapidly, began to open the door.

"You can't get out now," I said, and caught him by the arm, closing the door which he had managed to open. He appeared to be somewhat dazed for a second or two, and then sat down in his seat very pale and agitated. "I suppose it is just as well I did not try to jump out," he said, "I might have been killed." And so he certainly would have been. "I expect you have saved my life," he added. "May I ask your name?" I told him who I was, and he said, "My name is Sullivan." I replied that of course his name, fame, and appearance were all very well known to me, and we parted amicably at Waterloo.

It was the only time I ever met the composer whose work has given such real pleasure to millions of people in all parts of the world.

Sullivan naturally reminds one of Gilbert just as whisky does of soda, although I would not have any one pursue the simile too far.

It is the fortune, good or evil, of many famous persons to be very much misunderstood by the big Public, and I fancy that seldom was a man more generally given credit for a personality quite other than his own, than was the case with Sir W. H. Gilbert, ever to be remembered for his matchless series of Savoy Comic Operas, in collaboration with Sir Arthur Sullivan.

Till one actually came to know the man, one shared the opinion held by so many, that he was a gruff, disagreeable person ; but nothing could be less true of the really great humorist.

He had rather a severe appearance it is true, and like many other clever people, he had precious little use for fools of either sex, but he was at heart as kindly and lovable a man as you could wish to meet.

I recall many matters of interest which he was good enough to tell me at various times, some of them things I should like, if I dared, to reproduce here, and it was always very fascinating—if you could induce him to do so—to hear him talk of old times and of famous people.

Dickens he had known well. He considered him "a great genius, of course ; everyone must admit that." Asked what sort of man the great novelist was to look at and talk to, I mind me well how Sir William thought for a little, and then said : " He was—if you understand me—a 'gentish' person."

One quite understood at least what Gilbert meant, just as one could readily imagine the effect which such an expression of opinion would have had on Edmund Yates, ever the most constant disciple that even Dickens possessed.

Sir William's readiness of reply, especially to silly questions asked by boring people, is emphasised in the many stories told of him. According to some of these the eminent humorist was not especially polite at times, but it is of course to be remembered that in all probability many of these tales are not true, for every one knows how stories of various sorts and kinds tend to become attached to celebrated people.

The following may or may not be historical, but in any case it is a typical Gilbert story of the more moderate sort.

During a visit to America Sir William, who had not at that time received his title, was one evening at a dinner party, and later on in the drawing-room he met, among many others, an excellent lady who, after the regulation rhapsody concerning his work in connection with Sullivan, proceeded to discuss other well-known composers at very tedious length.

Said she, among much else, "Do you know, Mr. Gilbert, I admire the music of Bach so much; yes, I cannot tell you how much I admire Bach; is he still composing?"

The answer was remarkable and very Gilbertian.

“ No, Madam, not so far as I know. Indeed I should say he is now decomposing ! ”

I wonder if children still read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* ; I hope they do, for that and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, published two years later, are as every one knows—or used to know—two of the most delightful books ever written for children of all ages, and I am glad that I still possess my copies of the first editions published in 1870 and 1872 respectively.

As all playgoers are aware the two books of “ Lewis Carroll,” who was a clergyman, the Rev C. L. Dodgson, were dramatised by Saville Clarke with music by Walter Slaughter, but everyone probably does not know that at first it was Mr. Dodgson's idea to make a play of the stories himself, and to this end he approached Sir Arthur Sullivan about doing the music.

Nothing, however, came of the matter, for Sullivan was too busy at the time to deal with “ Alice,” and Mr. Dodgson found that there was all the difference in the world between writing a story and making a stage version of it. Finally, if Saville Clarke had not come along, and after a vast deal of talk induced the somewhat crotchety old gentleman to listen to reason, the stage version of *Alice in Wonderland* produced at the Prince's Theatre—now the Prince of Wales'—in '83 by Edgar Bruce, with Miss Phœbe Carlo in

the title part, would in all probability have never been given.

Talking of one composer recalls another, and although of course Paul Rubens would have been the last man in the world to permit the faintest suggestion that he was anywhere in the same street with Sir Arthur Sullivan, the poor young fellow who died so pitifully early, composed some very pretty and clever music.

Before his last illness took too severe a hold upon him, Rubens told me that one of the happiest things which had befallen him, was when he fell a victim to the charms of golf, and although he was never much of a player, he was for a time at least very keen about the game, and took special pride in the fact that he had lured George Edwardes under its spell.

The eminent theatrical manager became quite a golf enthusiast for a period, during which it was one of his special joys that he was able to beat Rubens. One day on meeting Paul, I asked him how his golf was progressing, and he replied, "Oh splendidly. I am improving every day."

Knowing how indifferent a player George Edwardes was, but also recollecting that he had vanquished my companion, I said, "Well, hang it all, Paul, you can't be very good yet, for George Edwardes tells me that he beat you the other day."

"Did George tell you that?" he said. "Well,

now *I'll* tell you something. Each time we got on to the Green I asked George how many strokes he had played, and each time he replied, 'I'm not quite sure, but *I know I've got two for the hole!*' Do you wonder that I lost?"

Here is another little golfing story, the hero of which is a well-known actor who need not be too closely identified. With all due deference to him, he is no great performer on the links of the club he is a member of, nor does he, as a matter of fact, play very often. One day, however, he was playing, and as usual playing very indifferently, although he did not appear to be at all aware of the fact. The caddy who was carrying his clubs was a new lad—at least new to him—possessed of many freckles and a face wholly devoid of expression.

Noticing that the caddy never once smiled nor sneered at his employer's bad strokes, the player after a time began to take quite a fancy to him. At the end of the round he said, in the hope doubtless of some sort of compliment, "I have been so busy lately that I am quite out of practice. That is why I am in such poor form to-day." The caddy gazed at him incredulously for a second or two, and then replied, "Gordelpus! then you *'ave* played golf before!"

And talking of this hero reminds me of an incident which occurred to his wife, who is, like her husband, a person of considerable standing on the Stage.

There is a certain vendor of birds and beasts of various sorts and kinds, whose familiar premises are situated not very far from Charing Cross. To him there came one day the eminent actress who desired to acquire a parrot, and naturally enough the bird fancier had precisely the one and only bird calculated to suit her, which had only been sold him half an hour previously by a gentleman of seafaring aspect, who looked considerably the worse for wear.

The lady liked the parrot ; the seller approved of the price he had induced her to pay for it ; the parrot did not care one way or the other, and so everyone was pleased.

The sequel happened two days later, when the lady drove up in a taxi and, entering the miniature menagerie, demanded that the proprietor should immediately be brought before her, and when he appeared she said, "Do you know that parrot which I bought from you the other day uses the most dreadful language. What am I to do about it?" "Ah, Mum," retorted the bird seller, "I should have warned you, but I thought you would have known. You see these birds will pick up anything. You'll have to be *very* careful what you say before that parrot!" Feeling herself utterly defeated, the lady took her departure without another word.

During the time my old friend Howard Talbot was composing the music of *The Arcadians*, one



of his most successful pieces, he and I went on a little voyage to the Canaries, and on ship board, and in various places such as Black Horse Square, Lisbon, where King Carlos was so foully murdered ; outside the English club at Teneriffe ; and seated on the roadside at Oratava, ideas came to the good Talbot and were duly preserved on the backs of envelopes while I sat still and watched in admiration.

Although he was born at Liège in Belgium my good friend Ivan Caryll is by parentage a Pole and was christened Felix Tilkins. And one day when we were motoring from Boulogne to Paris, we stopped at Abbeville for luncheon and walked round to the Town Hall looking at it with special interest, for it was there that Felix when little more than a lad had been engaged in the Town Orchestra, as one of the second violins. His salary then was a very small one, but on getting the job he wrote home to his mother like a dutiful son, to point out that his fortune was now made. As he himself said, if anyone at that time had told him that in comparatively few years he would be motoring past the place in his own car, a highly successful composer and a wealthy man, how utterly impossible the prophecy would have appeared.

Ivan Caryll, who is a pattern of kindly good-nature, is among many other things a very excellent story-teller, and unlike most tellers of tales

does not mind when they are somewhat against himself, resembling in this regard the celebrated Bessie Bellwood, always the cheeriest of personalities, as well as one of the very brightest ornaments of the music-hall stage in her day, and I well recollect one little story she related to "Tale-Pitcher" Binstead, then of the *Sporting Times*, and myself, in her carriage on our way back from the funeral of a mutual friend.

One morning as Bessie came out of Dane's Inn, then in the Strand, to get into her hansom, she remarked to the driver thereof, a famous character named Billy King, who drove the late Duke of Manchester, Lord Aylesbury, and other lights of leading of the period, "Well, Billy, it's quite a warm morning." To which that hero, apparently peevish at having been kept waiting in the sunshine for a couple of hours, retorted, "Yes, it is; and it would be a blanked sight warmer if there were many more like you about." All of which was very homely and pleasant, and nobody minded at all, for Billy was a very privileged person.

And still harping upon musicians recalls an interesting hour or two I spent at the old Eccentric Club in Shaftesbury Avenue, in the early hours of one memorable morning.

It was, I fancy, about half-past one or two, that I entered the Club and was going up the photograph-lined stairs, with a very musical companion,

when we heard some one playing the piano in the big room. "By Jove!" cried my friend, "that man plays well—he plays beautifully—quite like Paderewski," and then we opened the swing door leading into the room, where the piano was, and we saw that the player actually was Paderewski himself. The great pianist was good enough to play to a little audience of half a dozen for quite a long time, and, moreover, to improvise several things which came into his head, which made me regret more than ever that musical shorthand, if there be such a thing, and I were not on terms of intimacy.

"God is good to the Irish and not bad to the Scotch," was a frequent sentiment of Miss Bellwood, and one thinks of at least a couple of one's countrymen who have fared uncommonly well in London, at the hands of Providence, from small beginnings.

A good many years ago it occurred to a certain tall red-haired man who hailed from Glasgow, that there was no reason at all why Londoners should not be taught that whisky-and-soda was just as good a drink as the then much more familiar "B. and S."

Scotch whisky of a drinkable sort was then a comparatively rare thing in England, and one still recalls the dreadful brass-cleaning concoctions which masqueraded under the style and title thereof.

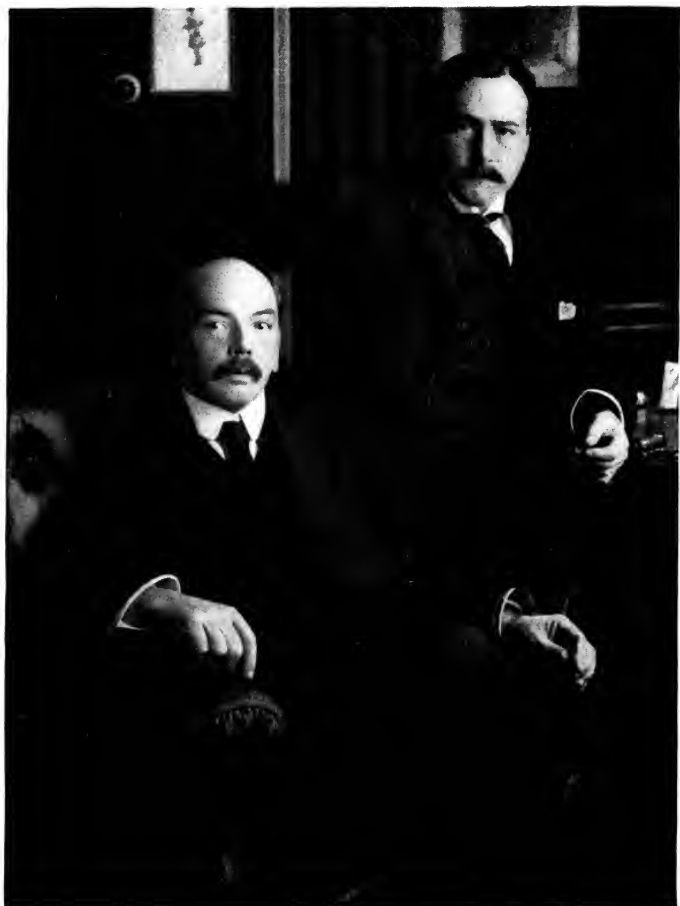
The tall sportsman from across the Border who thought thusly, was Mr. James Buchanan, and his business head-quarters were a couple of small offices in Bucklersbury, from whence came the "House of Commons Blend." Of the arrival of "Black and White" and other things, and the subsequent migration to the palatial premises at Black Swan Distillery, Holborn, and the acquirement of colossal wealth, most people are aware.

Later than Mr. Buchanan there came another Scot who hailed from the fair city of Perth, and when he arrived in London and sought to engage small offices in Craig's Court, near Charing Cross, the landlord knew so little of him that he demanded and received his diminutive rent in advance.

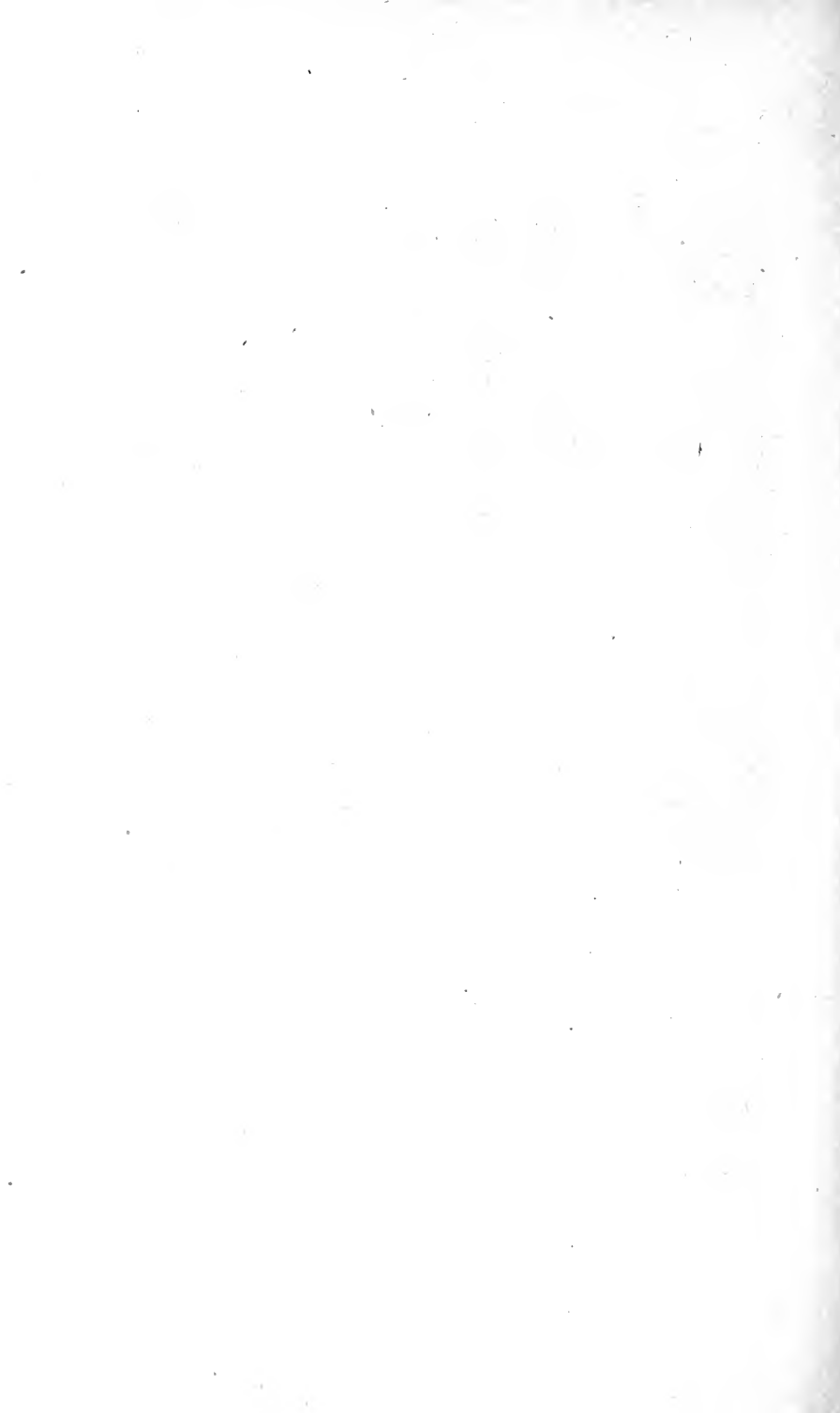
The new-comer was likewise a vendor of "The Curse of Scotland," and though his name was unfamiliar to Londoners in those days, it is well known now, for he was Sir Thomas Dewar.

A few years back the "brither Scots" combined their businesses, with a capital for the joint companies, of five million pounds, which sum is surely calculated to make present day teetotalers and anti-almost everything people, sit up and take very considerable notice.

Mr. Buchanan is, or was, a prominent figure on the Turf and quite a famous owner. Sir Thomas Dewar, on the other hand, favours dogs more than horses, and is keen about big game shooting.



THE RIGHT HON. L. S. JAMESON, C.B., AND MR. CHARLES BOYD, C.M.G.,  
HIS ONE TIME POLITICAL SECRETARY



Whisky is no doubt a good thing in moderation, but as is generally known too much of the "barley bree" is calculated to induce the seeing of spirits more or less materialistic, according to the quantity or quality of the potations indulged in.

Spirits of the ghostly sort naturally suggest one of the most famous and remarkable ghosts in existence—or out of it—whichever you like; the famous or at least greatly-written-about ghost of Glamis Castle, which is said to haunt a certain secret room.

Whether there is or is not a ghost at Glamis, I am not in a position to say, nor do I know of my own knowledge whether Lord Strathmore or his family attach serious consequence to the mysterious visitor, but I do remember hearing a very well-known Scottish cleric tell of an occasion when he was staying at Glamis, and one morning at breakfast the subject of the celebrated secret room cropped up in conversation. Lord Strathmore, who certainly did not appear to regard the matter as one of special consequence, told the following little story of an eminent church dignitary who had stayed at the Castle some years previously.

He was, it seemed, a fine example of the clerical beggar, and was always collecting money for church building and other good works of the kind. One night during his stay, he had just put out the light and got into bed, when suddenly

the ghost appeared. It was from its apparel, he said, undoubtedly a Strathmore of some centuries back.

With great presence of mind the clergyman took the first word. Addressing the ghost he stated that he was most anxious to raise a certain sum of money for a new church which he proposed to erect ; that he had a bad cold and could not well get out of bed ; but that his collecting book lay on the dressing-table within easy reach of the ghost, and that he would be extremely obliged if his visitor would favour him with a contribution.

The ghost said nothing at all in reply, but clearly betrayed the embarrassment he felt. Being a gentleman he was obviously most desirous of complying with the clergyman's request, but being likewise a ghost, he had no pockets about him and no money. After a painful pause, realising that the position was one of extreme delicacy and difficulty for him, the ghost shamefacedly faded away, and has never come back any more !

Coincidences are usually remarkable and often very uncanny, and one of the most curious of these within my recollection was that with which poor Frank Richardson, the well-known novelist and humorous writer, who made a sort of trademark of " Whiskers," was connected.

Richardson's dislike for whiskers was no doubt more or less genuine, but it was also not a bad idea from a business point of view, and gave him



an identity, which was naturally valuable to him, as an author with books to sell.

If you ever mentioned his name, someone would sure to say, "Oh, you mean that fellow who is always writing about whiskers," and it was in connection with whiskers that poor Frank built most of his literary fame, and a considerable deal of financial fortune.

Every now and again it used to occur to the somewhat erratic genius in his chambers at Albemarle Street, that he had nothing better to do at the moment than come along to 10 and 11 Fetter Lane and look me up. Usually he arrived at luncheon time, and then we fed together.

On the last occasion that he called at *The Pelican* office, he found me sorting some papers, one of which fell out of the bundle on to the floor. Richardson picked it up and looked at the list of the names and dates inscribed upon it. "What is this?" he asked. "It is the list of suicides I have known," I said; "if you read the names you will find you are acquainted with quite a number of them." "Good Lord," he said, "what a dreadful idea. Why, there are thirty-six of them. I wonder who the thirty-seventh will be."

He was the thirty-seventh.

## CHAPTER XIV

The bad old days and the present time Stage—The Theatre as a profession for men and women—Not at all a bad one for the latter—The connection between the Church and the Stage—The bygone mystery of the actor's calling—How and why it has disappeared—Some curious stage slips—"Beetle" Kemble's little mistake in *Hamlet*—The libel on Sir Charles Wyndham's sobriety—Henry Irving as a singer—A substitute for Sims Reeves—Actors and actresses who sing—and some who shouldn't—Miss Marie Löhr's first visit to Sir Herbert Tree—How Miss Marie Tempest came to forsake musical comedy—A matter of trousers—An understudy's opportunity—The tiny turns of Fate which make up history—Miss José Collins at Daly's—The clever daughter of a clever mother—"Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" and how its singer jumped into fame in two continents—An incredible success.

THE evil old Puritanical times are happily gone from us, when everything and everybody connected with the Stage was considered bad generally, and the women thereof everything that was vile in particular. But still, as we all know, every now and again there crops up some narrow-minded idiot, who delights in having his or her fling at the poor old Drama—which, by the way, is, as a matter of fact, singularly robust to-day—and saying everything that is disagreeable about Stageland and the dwellers within its gates.

Whenever the times are dull, the happenings

comparatively few, and the papers find it difficult to fill their columns with interesting matter, we are treated to long dissertations on the undesirability of the Stage as a profession for girls. "Why do women continue to crowd the Stage?" cries one correspondent, writing to a big daily paper not long ago, and the answer is quite obvious.

People do things because they are "good enough," and the Stage as a profession is not only good enough, but by far the most highly paid work open to the average young woman compelled to, or desirous of, earning her own living, if she be possessed of the right qualifications. Of course specially paid war-time jobs are to be excepted, and I am writing of normal periods. If a girl be fairly good-looking and well figured, and if she possesses a moderately good voice, she can without any great difficulty obtain an engagement at any of the musical comedy or revue theatres, at two pounds, or two pounds five shillings a week, and I should like to know in what other profession a girl can earn over a hundred pounds a year as a start, without much study, and with no investment of capital, by doing about two hours work a night, and a little more on matinee days?

If a girl becomes a governess or a Government clerk—let me repeat I am not of course alluding to emergency war workers—she must be exceptionally clever, and for the latter employment

must pass a somewhat severe examination. Also in neither case will her remuneration be anything like a hundred a year to start with. If she becomes a typist, she will in return for the probable expenditure of about twenty pounds on her machine, the cost of keeping it in order, of learning difficult shorthand, and equally difficult typing, and for working from eight to ten hours a day, get anything from fifteen to thirty shillings a week.

I am not writing of things I do not know, believe me. Shortly before the war, I advertised for a woman typist, and the number of well-educated, clever, and ladylike girls who offered their services, at ridiculous salaries, made one's heart sore, when one saw how terribly keen the competition was.

So long as musical comedies and revues are produced, so long will there be a demand for the services of attractive young women with decent voices, and the possessors of these special advantages will naturally enough take an uncommonly easy way of earning a wage amidst bright and interesting surroundings, considerably more cheerful than those which they would encounter in hard and frequently dreary office drudgery.

Added to all this, there are the numerous opportunities a girl on the Stage has of making a marriage of such a kind as she could not hope to do among the friends of her parents. She is seen by many more eligible young men than she prob-

ably would be at home, and her chances of matrimony are consequently greater. One knows of heaps and heaps of happy and successful marriages which chorus girls have made, and in writing thus, I am not thinking of exceptional cases where thinking-part young ladies have become peeresses. As for the dangers of Stage life, and all that foolery, there are no more than exist in any big shop, or business, where men and women are employed together, and, in the majority of cases, probably far fewer.

And as for the Stage as a profession for men, it is in my humble opinion like Journalism, or Art, or Music, an excellent one for a man who really cares for it, and has enough money to live on, whether he has engagements or not. If he has the means of existence, what time he is out of collar, so that it is not of vital consequence to him whether he gets engagements or not, it will assuredly happen, in accordance with the curious natural law which seems to prevail in all businesses and professions, that he *will* get the engagements right enough. As in other matters, so on the Stage—"To him that hath shall be given."

Of course the great prizes of Stageland fall into the hands of the very few, but they are of so exceedingly handsome a nature that they are well worth striving after if one's abilities and fancies turn towards the boards as a career. Possibly

there are better paid professions than that of acting. Assuredly there are many worse.

In these days, the Church, or at least that portion of it which counts, has quite ceased to regard the Stage as what Mlle. Gaby Deslys calls "shokeeng," and as a matter of fact, there is considerable connection, by birth at least, between the two callings. To name only a few of the well-known people who are connected with the Church, I may mention Mr. Matheson Lang, who is the son of the Rev. Gavin Lang of the Church of Scotland and a cousin of the Archbishop of York, also Miss Violet and Miss Irene Vanbrugh, daughters of the late Rev. Prebendary Barnes of Exeter. Mr. Lestocq, at one time a well-known player and latterly more familiar as Mr. Charles Frohman's representative in this country, is also a son of the Church; so too is Mr. St. John Denton, while Mrs. Langtry or Lady de Bathe, is a daughter of the late Dean of Jersey.

Mr. Basil Gill is a son of the Rev. John Gill of Cambridge, and Mr. Charles Hawtrey one of the sons of the late Rev. John Hawtrey, an Eton master, while Mr. Eade Montefiore, well known in connection with theatrical management, is a son of the Rev. Thomas Montefiore, Rector of Chiddock, and Rural Dean. There are many other instances one could readily name, but these will do to show that the connection between the Church and the Stage is a reasonably extensive one.

And still harping upon Stage matters, a well-known player recently remarked with a good deal of truth, that the romance of Stage life has become, in great part, like the presence of snakes in Ireland ; that in point of fact it does not exist nowadays.

Stage life in these times differs but little from most other sorts of life and work. It is practical, business-like, somewhat hard, decidedly matter-of-fact, and eminently unromantic.

The old time mystery surrounding the actors' calling has been dissipated by the very intimate photographer, the interviewer, the Press-agent, and the players themselves. The open candour of the latter in disclosing the secrets of their profession, of making known the intimate details of such matters as their make up, of giving the public particulars of their domestic lives, their tastes, their habits, their likes and dislikes, have been responsible for tearing away the veil which, in earlier days, formed an impenetrable barrier between the auditorium and the other side of the footlights.

Formerly, stage life was an irregular, haphazard, go-as-you-please sort of thing. The stage manager did not rule with a rod of iron as he does now ; the details of productions were often careless and left to chance, and the classic saying, " It will be all right at night," which for obvious reasons is heard but rarely nowadays, was of everyday or

every night occurrence, when actors, disclaiming any great amount of careful study for less arduous pursuits, trusted to luck to pull them through.

When all is mechanically precise, when actors are letter perfect, when stage hands abjure strong waters and nothing is left to accident or fortune, few opportunities occur for those amusing accidents and blunders which used to happen. A play nowadays may run for a year without anything untoward occurring to mar the even current of its progress. From a business point of view this is of course excellent, but the freedom from mishaps makes the work of the dramatic historian hard, for he has few good stories to tell, and hardly any amusing blunders to record.

In the alleged palmy days, actors often played eight or nine new parts a week, and this circumstance alone afforded ample opportunities for mistakes. And there were also the ignorance, stupidity, and indolence of the stage manager, which were fruitful of blunders.

Charles Matthews, the father of Sir Charles Matthews, Director of Public Prosecutions, has left it on record that on one occasion, when playing in *The Critic*, the actor who had rehearsed the part of Lord Burleigh in the morning was by reason, it is supposed, of the too great hospitality of friends, unable to appear at night. "Send on anybody," said the stage manager, indifferent as to the consequences of his remarkable command,



and only anxious that the play should willy-nilly proceed. The "anybody" was found, dressed for the part, and the book thrust into his hand. He read the stage directions—"Enter Lord Burleigh, bows to Dangle, shakes his head, and exit."

"Anybody" did enter, bowed to Dangle, and proceeded to shake Dangle's head, no doubt to the great delight of the audience, if to the horror of the player; and then made his exit.

Even the great Kean was not free from the commission of blunders, for it is related that, owing to nervousness or other causes, he once transposed the lines in *Hamlet*:

"Who tweaks me by the nose, plucks off my beard  
And blows it in my face."

to

"Who tweaks me by the beard, plucks off my nose  
And blows it in my face."

Once while playing at the Adelphi, in *The Harbour Lights*, Mr. William Terriss, for long the stock hero at that playhouse, and the father of Miss Ellaline Terriss, had to speak the "tag" which ran:

"Straight before us, like two stars of hope  
We see the harbour lights,"

but by evil chance, one evening he rendered the line:

"Straight before us, like two bars of soap,  
We see the harbour lights."

which remarkable expression of vision considerably dashed Miss Jessie Millward—the heroine—to whom the line was addressed.

There was the case, too, of Mr. Kemble's celebrated lapse in *Hamlet*, while playing Polonius to Sir Herbert Tree's Dane, which came about thus.

During a wait Charles Brookfield, always clever and mischievous, wandered into Kemble's dressing-room, and said, "Don't you think, Beetle, that in your big speech the line

"Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar"

would be much more impressive, if you gave it

"Be thou familiar, but by no means bawdy."

"Good Lord, Charles," said Kemble, what a dreadful thing to suggest. "Fancy daring to alter a word of Shakespeare. And hang it all, now that you have put it into my head, it is a thousand to one that I'll go on the stage and say it." And sure enough poor "Beetle" did do so, with his fine booming voice, to the immense amazement of those who heard it. Tree used to laugh about the mishap afterwards; but he was thunderstruck at the time.

Few actors had greater control over themselves on the Stage than Sir Charles Wyndham, but even he was considerably "dried up" on at least one occasion, when he was playing *David Garrick* at the Criterion.

In this it will be recollected that in order to disgust the love-stricken Ada Ingot, Garrick pretends to be intoxicated, and old Simon Ingot, the father, orders him out of the room, saying, "You are drunk, Mr. Garrick ; leave this house at once."

I fancy, on the occasion I refer to, Mr. Farren was playing Ada's father. Anyhow, the old Ingot of the occasion, whoever he was, considerably electrified the hero of the piece as well as the audience by exclaiming, "You are drunk, Mr. Wyndham ; leave this house at once !"

The difficulties which players find themselves in at times, are by no means all of their own causing, for there have been occasions when it has been necessary for some reason or other, for an actor to jump into a breach created by some breakdown or other mishap, which he was but little constituted by nature to fill.

We all remember the great actor, Sir Henry Irving, of course, and most of us no doubt saw him in all his most famous parts, but few of his admirers, I venture to think, ever imagined him as a singer of sentimental ballads ; yet the thing duly occurred and in this manner.

Irving was appearing in that remarkable old play *Rob Roy* at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh. It was of course in his young days, and he was playing the part of Captain Thornton, when Sims Reeves, who was the tenor-lover, Francis Osbaldiston, was seized with one of his periodical

"indispositions" which became so maddeningly frequent during his later and more celebrated life, and sent along the usual medical certificate to show that he was unfitted to appear that night.

The Edinburgh manager, old Mr. Wyndham, father of Mr. Fred Wyndham of the famous theatrical firm, Howard and Wyndham, suddenly swooped down on Irving and said, "Look sharp! The curtain is just going up, and you must take Sims Reeves place." Irving, very much aghast, replied, "What, with all the songs?" "Yes, all of them," retorted the manager. "And I sang them, too," Irving used to say, "yes; *My Love is like a red, red rose; Though I leave thee now in sorrow; Everything!*"

It is indeed wonderful to think of grand old Sir Henry as a soloist—wonderful indeed, if you ever heard him sing. At Edmund Yates' house at Marlow, I once sat next to him, what time a number of us joined in a certain chorus, and the great actor's discords, and strange sounds therein, were, as I well remember, very dreadful and terrifying to listen to. Henry Irving had a remarkable speaking voice, a beautiful smile, was a very great actor, a fine kindly splendid fellow in every way, but though I yield to none in the affectionate regard and admiration I always had for one of the most lovable men I ever had the good fortune to know, I cannot bring myself to describe him as other than the very worst singer I

ever listened to ; and I have heard some fairly bad ones in my time.

Talking of singing in connection with acting, recalls the fact that quite a number of male and female ornaments of the Stage, who are supposed to be singers, are certainly no great shakes at the game, and in fact, though you would find it difficult to get them to agree with you, act a very great deal better than they warble. On the other hand there are many actors and actresses who usually play " straight " parts in these days, and who also possess fine voices ; I do not of course refer to comediennes like Miss Marie Tempest, or to actors like Mr. Hayden Coffin, who were first of all favourites with the public on account of their singing, before they took to appearing in non-musical pieces, but to players like Miss Marie Löhr, and Miss Gladys Cooper, to name only a couple of instances, each of whom is the possessor of a very pretty voice.

Both these ladies have now achieved great things on the stage, and are manageresses. Indeed, it will be remembered that Miss Löhr was, for a time, leading lady at His Majesty's with Sir Herbert Tree, and it is curious to recall that some years before she came to be the principal female attraction at the theatre, she called on Sir Herbert in the hope of being engaged for a small part, and he couldn't or wouldn't see her.

I asked Tree one day, if the story were true,

and he said it quite well might have been, for from twenty to thirty would-be players at the theatre, called to see him each day, and if he had interviewed every one of them individually he would have had no time to attend to any other of his innumerable duties in the conduct of the big place.

How Miss Tempest came to forsake musical plays for "straight" comedies, was more or less a matter of trousers—and Chinese trousers at that.

It was when George Edwardes produced Edward Morton's musical play, *San Toy*, at Daly's Theatre, wherein Miss Tempest had during a portion of the evening to array herself as a Chinese boy in close fitting trow-trows, which reached to her ankles. The lady thought the length of these garments unbecoming, and converted them into very brief affairs, such as are usually worn by the pantomime hero Aladdin, and in these she appeared on the first night, and very neat she looked, according to my recollection. But the good George took it into his head that their brevity spoilt the character of the dress, and he insisted on the fair wearer increasing the length of her pants. This Miss Tempest declined to do, and the final result of the somewhat heated debate thereon, was that the lady left Daly's, being succeeded by a clever girl who, up till then, had never had a real chance, Miss Florence Collingbourne, who scored so highly in the part that she played it during the close

upon two years' run of the piece, and looked as if she were going to achieve even greater things in subsequent productions. Then, unfortunately for the Lyric Stage, Miss Collingbourne forsook the boards for matrimony, and I believe has never since played professionally in a theatre.

Thus it was that Miss Tempest ceased to adorn Daly's with her sweet-voiced presence, forsook musical comedy for all time, and devoted herself to comedy without music, with such success that soon afterwards she became an actress-manageress, and is to-day one of the best known comedienues either on the English or American Stages, for she is equally popular and at home in either country.

It is just out of little turns of Fate like this that history is made, and if Miss Tempest and Mr. Edwardes had seen eye to eye with regard to the length of the lady's breeks, perchance she might still be leading lady at Daly's, albeit she could not be a more attractive one than Miss José Collins who now holds the position.

Miss Collins is the now famous daughter of an old-time famous mother, for the latter lady was Miss Lottie Collins, a music-hall singer of great celebrity in her day, whose singularly idiotic song "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" with its very energetic high kicking dance, set all England, and at least half of America, wellnigh crazy for a time, and led her to fame, and no doubt to fortune as well.

## CHAPTER XV

How history repeats itself—In the matter of night clubs and other things—The Old Lotus—Fatty Coleman as secretary—Evans's—The Corinthian—Dudley Ward and the Gardenia—The Alsatians—La Goulue in Leicester Square—Her rival Nini Patte-en-l'air at the Duke of York's—A remarkable rehearsal—Maurice Farkoa's London début—A theatre on fire—How a panic was averted at Birmingham—Arthur Roberts to the rescue—Oceana the Beautiful—Her beginning and parentage—Whimsical Walker and the purchase of Jumbo the elephant—How Barnum made £540,000 out of a £3000 investment—James Bailey's office hours at Olympia—About Zazel—John Strange Winter and Bootle's Baby—What the Bishop of London said—George Augustus Sala and his "Journal"—"Winter's Weekly"—Clement Scott's "Free Lance."

**I**T is curious how every ten or twelve years history goes on repeating itself in at least two ways. The recurrence of roller skating, which lives periodically, with a great boom while it lasts, and the re-birth of the Night Clubs, or Supper Clubs, as they prefer to call themselves.

Of the more recent of these institutions, such as Murray's, The Four Hundred, Mr. Payne's Lotus, and Ciro's, it is not necessary to speak ; some of them ceased to be after very brief careers, some are still going on. In any case the circumstance of their being is such comparatively recent



history, that there is no need to do more than merely allude to them now.

One of the earliest and best known of the supping and dancing clubs was the old Lotus. I call it old, to distinguish it from the more modern place of that name, started by Mr. "Papa" Payne, which did not last very long.

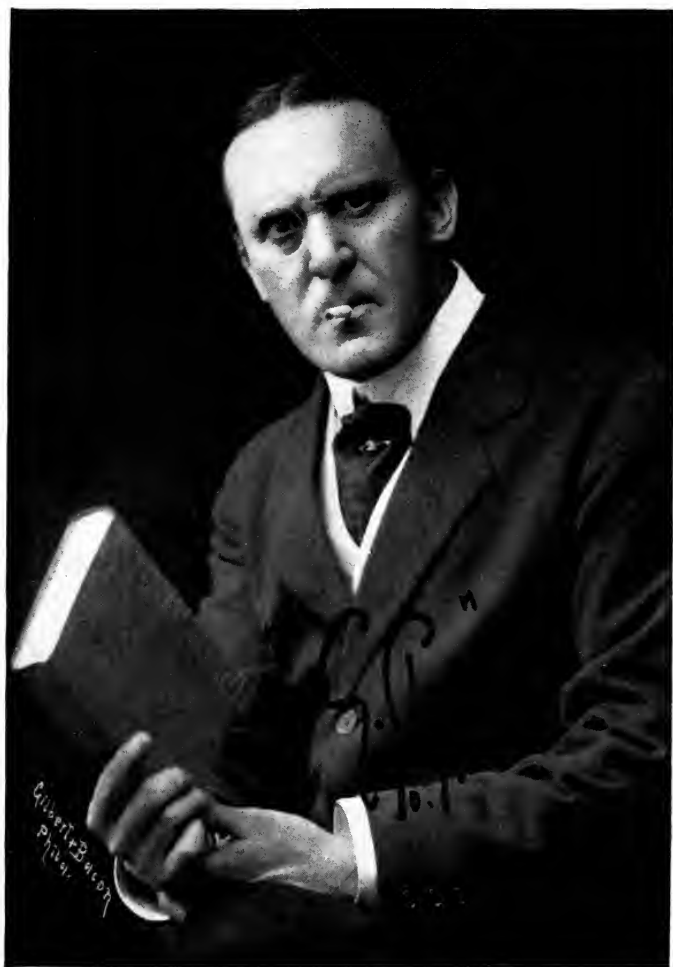
The old Lotus, which was going very strong and well in 1881-2, was at the head of Regent Street, and was financed by various well-known men-about-Town of that time, although John Hollingshead, who then owned and managed the old Gaiety Theatre, was the nominal proprietor, and Fatty Coleman was Secretary. Later on John gave up the Club about the time the late Lord Lonsdale died, and Fatty blossomed forth as proprietor as well as Secretary.

I was not a member of the Lotus myself, and was only once in it as a visitor, at the tail end of its existence, but an old-time member of it tells me that it was quite the cheeriest and jolliest cock and hen club that ever was. The men were all absolutely of the right sort, all the best and brightest fellows about Town at that time; as for the ladies—whom God bless—they were almost all theatrical. Many dear little souls who had no connection with the Stage tried very hard to enter, but the Lotus was not a Club that anyone could get into by a very long way, and few outsiders appeared there more than once.

Many of the charming lady visitors and members are married—several of them took the precaution to do so into the Peerage—and I daresay that some of them will smile with kindly recollection when they read these lines, and think of the good fellows who kept things lively in the days referred to, like “Mollycatush” Lonsdale, Joey Aylesford, his brothers Clem and Dan Finch, fine old Bob Hope-Johnstone, Hughie Drummond, and the rest. “Molly” was succeeded by his brother Hugh, the present Earl, and his widow died not long since as the Marchioness of Ripon.

Then there was Harry Tyrwhitt, with his inevitable gardenia, the most intimate friend of King Edward, at that time, of course, Prince of Wales ; Billy Gerard, Esmé and Douglas “Brigs” Gordon, Rupert Carrington, John Delacour, Chris. Sykes, the old Duke of Beaufort, Algy Bastard, Charlie Cunningham, and ever so many more.

The nearest approach to the old Lotus was probably The Corinthian at its start. I say at its start, advisedly, for later on, when the undesirables began to make their way in, the place degenerated sadly, but at the beginning, when John Hollingshead was proprietor, and Dick Simpson secretary, the Corinthian which was in York Street, St. James's Square, was a very pleasant place indeed, where what poor Newnham Davis used to call “clean-shirted Bohemia” used to assemble to sup and dance.



*Photo.*

MR. G. P. HUNTLEY

*Bacon, Philadelphia*

Le

There were other dancing clubs, too, where things were a deal more free and easy, such as The Gardenia, next to the Alhambra in Leicester Square, which was originally started by the Bohee Brothers, a couple of very large, coloured gentlemen who played the banjo with great skill and incredible energy, and who first found their way to this country from America, when Haverley's Minstrels came over here to Her Majesty's Theatre, and anon to Drury Lane.

For a time a portion of Society, with a capital "S" took up the playing of the banjo quite keenly, and one of the Bohees attempted to teach King Edward how to perform on the instrument, with only moderate success.

The Bohees soon sold The Gardenia to Mr. Dudley Ward, father of the Member for Southampton, and during his control of the place, The Gardenia was a very merry, if somewhat rowdy spot. Mr. Ward induced that remarkable light of the old Moulin Rouge in Paris, La Goulue, to come over with some of her company, and show us how eccentric quadrilles should be danced. They were eccentric right enough ; though not more so than those measures performed some years later at the Duke of York's Theatre, by the Nini Patte-en-l'air Company.

Things began to tail off at The Gardenia, for people can't keep on sitting up all night for ever ; and Mr. Dudley Ward, with infinite wisdom, sold

his club as a going concern, to a very pleasant Australian, Mr. "Shut-eye" Miles, who I fear made no fortune out of his deal. Ultimately the place met the fate of many of its fellow institutions and was closed by the police.

Then there was the Percy Supper Club, off Tottenham Court Road, run by a Mr. Dolaro, who was understood to have been the husband of the one-time very popular favourite Selina Dolaro ; also The Alsatians in Oxford Street, a very big place, which Mr. Harding Moore, a brother of Lady Wyndham, controlled, after he had made a considerable fortune out of his lesser venture, The Waterloo, at the foot of Waterloo Place. There were also The Palm, The Nell Gwynne in Long Acre, The Arlington, The White Beer Club—a very dreadful place—close to the stage door of the Alhambra, and earlier and rowdier than any of them, The Austro-Hungarian in Greek Street, Soho.

Perhaps the first of the really smart supper clubs was The New, afterwards rechristened Evans's, in Covent Garden, where The National Sporting Club now is. It had a chequered career, and faded away into nothingness ultimately. But it was smart enough at its start, when King Edward, then Prince of Wales, gave it his support, and Colonel Wellesley was secretary, just before he married Miss Kate Vaughan of the old Gaiety, and when most of the Marlborough House set and

those who wanted to be considered of it, used to sup and dance there o' nights till even later than "four and five in the morning" as the old song has it.

A little way back I alluded to the appearance of La Goulue, the dancer of eccentric quadrilles, whom no doubt many of those who read these lines saw in old days at the Moulin Rouge, when she was at the height of her success; for every Britisher who visited Paris went to the Red Mill at least once, and no doubt such will also recall Rayon d'Or, Nini Patte-en-l'air, La Fromage, Eglantine, and the rest of the very active ladies, the chief quality of whose dances was the singularly free exposure of garments not as a rule publicly exhibited.

As a matter of fact these good ladies were very ordinary dancers; they could high-kick fairly well, and could do the splits, but they could do neither the least bit like the numerous troupes of Tiller girls, who have been so popular in Paris, London, and in the country for many a day and night.

It was during the run of *Go Bang!* the musical comedy by Dr. Osmond Carr and Mr. Adrian Ross, which followed *Morocco Bound*, that Nini Patte-en-l'air and her three companions came to the Duke of York's and appeared therein.

Mr. Herbert Pearson, who was then running the show, had gone over to Paris, with his stage

manager, Mr. Frank Parker, with the avowed intention of bringing La Goulue back with them. But the lady had then, I believe, married, and reasons of a domestic nature prevented any special measure of activity, and so it was that her rival Nini Patte-en-l'air came instead.

It was on the evening the Patte-en-l'air Troupe made their first appearance at the Duke of York's that a couple of male duettists, who subsequently became very famous, were seen and heard in London for the first time. They sang French duets, wore black satin knee breeches, pink dress coats and were called Fisher and Farkoa, the latter afterwards becoming the very well-known Mr. Maurice Farkoa, who appeared in so many of George Edwardes' successes.

I shall ever recall the morning on which the Nini Patte-en-l'air Troupe turned up at the Duke of York's for rehearsal. The *Go Bang!* Company including Miss Letty Lind, Miss Agnes Hewitt, Miss Jessie Bond, John L. Shine, Charles Danby, George Grossmith, Arthur Playfair, Harry Grattan and Fred Storey, were all in front, or at the side, to see how the French ladies were going to shape. There was a difficulty at the start however. The ladies' practice skirts had not arrived. "Did that matter?" asked the dark-eyed Nini, "for herself and her girls not at all." And they straightway began to rehearse in their everyday attire.

I say began, because soon after they had



started, and when the conductor of the orchestra had turned as crimson as a turkey cock in a violent sunset, and when the members thereof had gradually become so interested in the show that they left off playing one after the other, till the hero who controlled the triangle was left mildly tapping away by himself, Mr. Frank Parker, who was not, according to my recollection, too readily shocked, considered it well, greatly to the indignation of Madame Nini, to stop the rehearsal, till such time as adequate dancing attire should arrive. As Mr. Parker justly observed on the occasion, "we had seen all that was necessary."

And talking of somewhat sultry shows, have you ever been in a theatre when the cry of "Fire" has arisen? It is not at all a funny experience, and it has occurred to me on two occasions, once in the Stadt Theatre in Düsseldorf, and another time at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, Birmingham. In each case the same things happened. Something went wrong, sparks fell on the stage, some idiot called out "fire," the audience rushed for the doors, someone fell down, dozens of others tripped on the top, and the entrances became crowded up. In neither affair was the fire of any special consequence, but in the crush many people were injured.

In the case of the Birmingham happening, it was when *Joan of Arc* was being played by the

London Company, which had previously been appearing in the piece at the Old Opera Comique in Town, the said company, by the way, including Arthur Roberts, Marius, Danby, Agnes Hewitt, Marion Hood, and Ada Blanche, who had temporarily taken Alma Stanley's part as Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury.

In the middle of one of the scenes, down fell a bit of the sky border, blazing away for all it was worth. It came down on the stage with a thump, and sparks flew from it on all sides, some of them landing on a chorus girl's wig, which promptly burst into flames. Screams from the chorus ladies ; cries of " Fire " from the audience ; everyone on his or her feet, making for the doors ; curtain rapidly lowered ; and as Mr. R. G. Knowles used to sing " There is a picture for you ! "

I was seated in the front row of the stalls, well away from the nearest exit, which promptly became jammed, owing to a woman tripping over her dress, and dozens of others piling on top, and I did not like the look of things at all, till one of the company, whom I knew, put his head round the corner of the proscenium, and called out to me, " It's all right, don't move. " So I sat tight.

Then Arthur Roberts, Miss Agnes Hewitt, and some of the others came in front of the curtain, the band struck up a tune, and the actors performed a sort of spoof quadrille. The audience stopped to watch them, and then realising that

there couldn't be much the matter, came back to their seats, and after a brief delay things proceeded. No great harm was done beyond some legs and arms being broken in the crush, but for a few minutes it did look as if there was going to be real trouble, and by the readiness of Mr. Roberts and his companions, a very tragic happening was beyond doubt averted.

Among the many specially beautiful Stage ladies who were to be seen about this time, was one who achieved quite a considerable measure of celebrity in Paris, as well as in London, who called herself Oceana, and who used to disport herself upon the slack wire with lots of skill and grace. There was a deal of contradictory talk as to her identity, and one heard all sorts of fantastic tales as to her birth and parentage. But there was really nothing mysterious about the matter, which may as well be set forth here once and for all.

Some years ago, an old circus performer, named Ethardo, died, who though unfamiliar to most of us, was well known in the sixties as a contemporary of Leotard, the flying trapeze performer, and Blondin, the famous tight-rope walker. Ethardo was chiefly famous as what is termed a spiral ascensionist, and he was, among other things, the stepfather and teacher of Oceana.

As a child, "Dolly," as she was known to her friends, was a clever performer on the slack wire,

and as a juggler, and later on when she grew up, and became uncommonly good to look at, her fame all over the Continent, and over here, was considerable. As her beauty increased her stage talent seemed to diminish, but her charms of face and figure made up for any failing thereof. She was greatly admired by many good judges of beauty, and the late Shah of Persia was understood to think very highly indeed of her looks and abilities, whilst several of the exceedingly handsome jewels which she used to wear during her show, were tokens of his appreciation of both.

And talking of the circus and its performers, recalls one of the very best of the old circus clowns—and he is not so old either—Whimsical Walker, who has been for so many Christmasses at Drury Lane in pantomime, that he is justly looked upon as the legitimate successor to the famous Harry Payne.

Walker has played all over the world, and has been attached to pretty well every circus of standing in this country, and the Continent. It was while he was with Barnum in America, that the great showman sent him to London, to purchase Jumbo, the famous elephant from the Zoological Society; and the newspaper booming which occurred in connection with the sale of the great animal was remarkable. For several weeks the papers were full of articles protesting against allowing Jumbo to leave Regent's Park. Hundreds

of letters were written by children, and others pointing out that life would be no longer worth living if Jumbo left us ; and so on and so forth. Indeed there was talk of a national subscription to purchase the animal from the Zoo people, and keep him here.

But in the end when the boom had been worked for all it was worth—and that was a lot—Walker completed the purchase of Jumbo for £3000, and duly took the elephant to New York, where his entire cost and something over was got back on the first day he was shown ; and Mr. James Bailey, who afterwards became Barnum's partner, told me that from first to last, Jumbo earned for the firm, just about £540,000, so that he proved a very fair investment.

Bailey was a remarkable man, as many will recollect, who met him when " The Greatest Show on Earth " was over here at Olympia. In many ways he was as unlike the typical showman as it is possible to imagine, and more closely approached one's idea of a dissenting Minister. He was an extraordinarily energetic man, even when he was in London and no longer young, and while he always made a point of being in bed by ten o'clock, he was at work in his office long before most business men think of getting up.

On an occasion I wanted to discuss a matter of business with him, and asked him to give me an appointment for the purpose of so doing. I knew

how busy a man he was, and so I said, "Name your own time, and I'll be there." "How would six o'clock to-morrow suit you," he asked. "Well," I said, "six is rather an awkward time; you see I shall be leaving my office then, after my day's work, and will be tired." "Oh," he replied, "I mean six in the morning." I pointed out to him, however, that this would hardly do, as I couldn't sit up as late as that, and so we arranged matters by agreeing to lunch together instead.

George Starr, who was Bailey's right-hand man, when he was over here, subsequently became manager of the Crystal Palace, and comparatively few people are aware that the quiet middle-aged lady, his wife, who used to be about with him a good deal, was the once famous Zazel, who used to be fired from a cannon at the Old Aquarium, Westminster, by Farini.

The performance was burlesqued at the Old Gaiety by Edward Terry and Nellie Farren, and when the latter got into the dummy cannon, one recalls the curious jerky voice of Terry saying, "Are you in; are you far in; are you Nellie Far-in?"

Mrs. Arthur Stannard, who was known to a considerable portion of the world by her pen name of John Strange Winter, author of *Bootle's Baby* and many other novels, chiefly of a military sort, told me that the first time she saw Zazel placed in her cannon to be fired from it, what

time the band stopped playing, and Farini demanded "absolute silence" from the audience, she was so overcome that she gave a loud scream, which very nearly upset the calculations of "the human cannon ball" and led to disaster.

*Boottle's Baby* was dramatised when it was at the height of its success as a novel, and Miss Minnie Terry, a niece of the great Ellen, made her first appearance in the play, as Mignon, the "Baby" of the story. Miss Edith Woodworth, who subsequently became Mrs. Charles Kettlewell, produced the piece at the Old Globe Theatre, and in the cast were, among others, Mr. Edmund Maurice, and the three Charles, Collette, Sugden, and Garthorne, the last named a brother of Mr. Kendal. Miss Minnie Terry is now the wife of Mr. Edmund Gwenn, the very versatile actor.

A story used to be told wherein it was narrated that Mrs. Stannard upon an occasion, seeking to introduce herself to the late Bishop of London, said, "My lord, I am John Strange Winter," and seeing the good prelate gaze upon her, with a puzzled expression, she added, "You know—*Boottle's Baby*." Then the Bishop fled.

Anon, meeting his hostess, the Bishop took her on one side and said, "Do you know, Lady—that you are entertaining a lunatic. She came up to me a little time ago, and first of all stated that she was a man—and then that she was a child!"

I remember asking Mrs. Stannard, who was the most amiable and kindly of women, as to the veracity of the legend. "It was a good enough story," she said, "good enough to have been true; but as a matter of fact, it wasn't."

Just as George Augustus Sala, on leaving *The Daily Telegraph*, started a paper of his own, and called it *Sala's Journal*, Mrs. Stannard thought that she, too, would like to possess a paper, and so she started *Winter's Weekly*, which lived for some time, and then faded away.

Clement Scott, the famous dramatic critic of *The Telegraph*, "tired of being edited to death," as he said, thought that he too would like to have a paper of his own, and launched the *Freelance*, which did not last very long. Scott knew all about the literary side of running a weekly, but the business portion with the innumerable cares and worries, even in the case of a small paper, were too much for him. After his death, his widow carried the *Freelance* on for a time, but it gradually failed, and ultimately was not.



## CHAPTER XVI

The Duke of Fife as a bicyclist—A friend in need—A good Scotch name—The ill-fated voyage of the P. and O. *Delhi*—Wrecked off Cape Spartavento—King Edward and the champagne—How the term "Boy" originated—The Bishop and the Peer—How the Duke scored—Turning the tables with a vengeance—Mr. G. P. Huntley's experience in Petrograd—An audience which didn't know its own mind—The hangman's letter and his hope—What an execution is really like—Not so thrilling as it is usually painted—Sir Augustus Harris and his idea of luck—The Baddeley cake and its cutting, at Drury Lane—A remarkable function of former days—"Hawnsers fer Korrispondinks"—The beginning of Lord Northcliffe's fame and fortune—Mr. Charles Cochran and the circus—The last Covent Garden circus—George Batty and King Edward—Present-day theatrical salaries—Their remarkable size—What George Edwardes said about *An Artist's Model*—Where will theatrical expenses end?

IT is curious how Fate sometimes brings you in contact with distinguished people, and here is just one instance of the sort of thing I mean. One day while walking on the road from Rottingdean to Brighton, I came upon a singularly inexpert cyclist who, as we neared each other, came off his machine and hit the road with considerable vigour. I helped him to his feet, and hoped he wasn't much hurt, and he, a most cheery soul with reddish grey hair and moustache said, "Devil a bit, I'm all right, but I'm afraid my bike isn't. Do you understand

these things at all ? ” I told him that I had been a bicyclist since the days of the wooden bone-shaker, and was soon able to put right the little that was wrong with his wheel. After that I gave him some lessons in the polite art of mounting and getting off, in other fashion than head-first, which appeared to be his favourite method.

We chatted about various matters and found we had some mutual friends including his medical adviser, Sir Maurice Abbot-Anderson, who had not at that time been knighted, and who is, by the way, the elder brother of Mr. Allan Aynesworth, the well-known actor.

When we parted my cycling pupil thanked me very warmly for the little I had done for him, and said, “ Who am I indebted to for all this kindness ? ” and I replied that my name was Boyd. “ Ah,” he said, “ a good Scotch name, like my own which is Duff.” And I answered that I was well aware of the fact, and that he took his title from the East coast county I hailed from, for he was the late Duke of Fife. He was good enough to hope that we might meet again some time, but we never did.

Later on an old friend called at my office in Fetter Lane, just off Fleet Street, to say good-bye. He was on his way back to China, to resume his duties as manager of a great bank, and he told me he was to sail in a couple of days’ time in the P. and O. *Delhi*. I envied him his voyage, being

very keen about the sea, and the ships which sail on it, but he thought the journey would be a tedious one, for the passengers, a list of whom he had seen, did not appear to be a very interesting lot, although he added that the Duke and Duchess of Fife were among them. "It will be a very uneventful trip, I fear," he said.

Well, as everyone knows, that last voyage of the *Delhi* was anything you like but that, for she found bad weather immediately on leaving the Thames, and took it with her all the way to Cape Spartavento, off which she was wrecked; and it was owing to the exposure he went through on that occasion, that the poor Duke, already a very ill man, met his death.

Some weeks afterwards I passed quite close to the *Delhi* as she lay on the beach not far from Tangier with her back broken. I was in the old R.M.S. *Atrato*, which under its rechristened name was sunk early in the big war by the Huns, a like fate befalling the *Aguilla*, which was the last ship I had previously been on board.

Here, too, is another little matter connected with the Duke's great friend, and father-in-law, King Edward, which may be new to some. Although champagne is comparatively seldom drunk by many, excepting on occasions of very special hilarity, it is drunk at times, and one still hears it alluded to as "the Boy" in obvious ignorance as to the origin of the style and title.

This is how champagne came to be called "Boy." At a certain shooting party whereat was good King Edward, the day was warm, and a lad followed the guns, wheeling a barrow-load of champagne packed in ice. Thus, when any of the sportsmen felt like a drink—and they often did, for the day was muggy—they called "Boy!" to the following lad, and the frequency with which this occurred, led to the adoption of the term.

Those who had been shooting with the Prince of Wales, as King Edward then was, used the expression and told their friends how the designation had come into being, and those who had not been of the Royal party, but wished they had, used the term also. Thus it found its way into the papers and soon everybody was doing it. Wherefore you will observe the futility of the "the" as a prefix to plain "Boy." The matter is of course a small one, but for goodness sake let us be accurate even if the heavens fall!

Bishops as a rule are very wise men. If they were otherwise they would in all human probability not have become Bishops. And yet one has known an occasion wherein a Prince of the Church came off second best in an encounter with a Peer who is not supposed to be possessed of any remarkable mental qualities.

The Bishop visited the Peer—at the time a good deal more youthful in many ways than he is

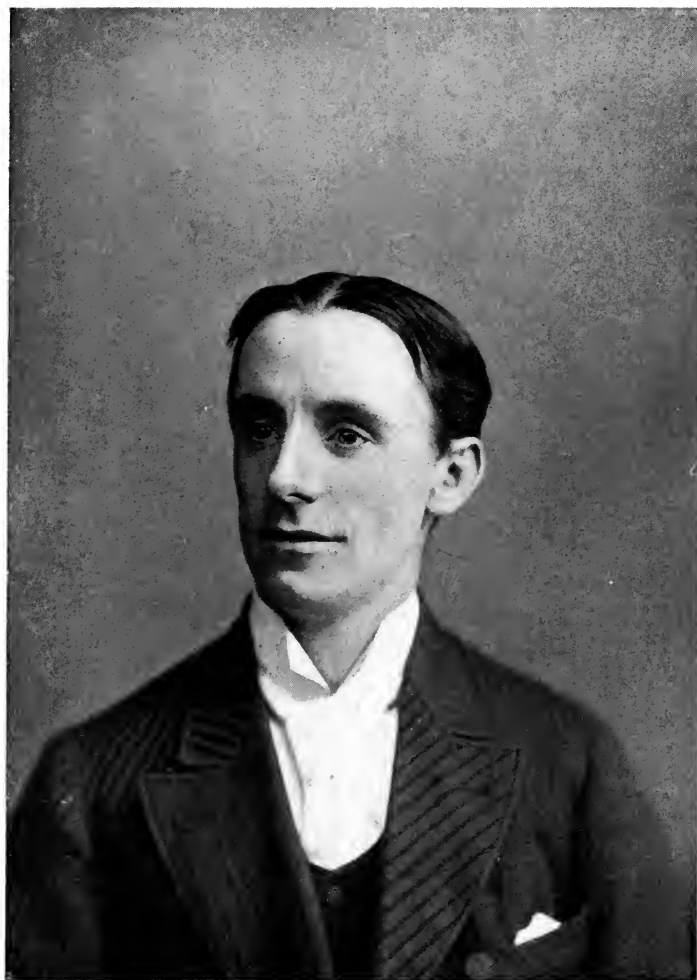


Photo.

DAN LENO, THE KING'S JESTER

London Stereoscopic



now—with a view to reproving him gently, anent sundry matters which had been fairly public property for some little time previously. The Prelate, who is among other things a quite up-to-date man, called on the Peer, and speaking, as he said, “as one man of the world talking to another,” suggested among other things, that if his present amorous pursuit must be followed, he at least should arrange matters more quietly.

The Peer, who was—and is—not altogether a fool, saw his chance and took it promptly. Holding up his hands in horror he exclaimed, “Good heavens! Have I heard you aright? Do you, a Bishop, tell me to do as I am doing in secret? If you had told me that I was ‘warring terribly against the soul,’ as my relatives say, I should have respected you. If you,” he continued, “had said I was going to the devil, I should have bowed my head. As it is I am disgusted with your low moral tone, and must ask you to leave my house!” And the Bishop, who is not as a rule at a loss for words, went out greatly surprised and discomfited. Many people who heard the story at the time it occurred smiled quite loudly, including quite a number of the Bishop’s brethren.

The affairs of Russia have been much mixed up with our own of recent times and the differences of opinion upon endless matters in the one-time kingdom of the Tsar are so far-reaching and remarkable, that many of us have become impressed

with the belief that Russians, like so many of the Irish, don't exactly know what they do want. In this connection one recalls a little story of my good friend the eminent comedian, Mr. G. P. Huntley, who once visited Russia professionally. Upon one occasion he was appearing in Petrograd, and it was made plain to him that somehow or other he was not pleasing his audiences so much as he would have liked to have done. In short, they didn't seem to think a great deal of him.

One of the electrical engineers at the theatre of the Russian capital, by way of cheering him up as much as possible in these depressing circumstances, made matters quite clear thus: "You see," he said, "these Russian people here are an ignorant lot of devils. They don't know what they *do* want. And," he added, "even if you *had* been good they wouldn't have liked you!"

Gruesome relics usually find ready purchasers and fetch considerable prices, but evidently the market for the autographs of hangmen is a limited one. The signatures of Calcraft, Berry, and Billington "neatly framed in carved ebony frames" offered for sale some little time back, only fetched seventeen shillings, a paltry sum truly when one reflects that the autographs of mere poets have secured infinitely higher figures.

In my younger days I was, among other things, a conscientious collector of autographs, and with a view to adding to my collection, I wrote to Mar-



wood, who was at that time public hangman in succession to Calcraft. He replied with the following letter :—

“ I send my name with pleasure. Praise God he is good to all. I hope I may meet you one day, not professionally.

Your obedient servant,

WILLIAM MARWOOD.

Crown Officer.”

Talking of executioners naturally suggests their grim calling, and the only execution house I have seen is that at Maidstone Prison, and it is a regular stone building, and not a shed as such places usually are, and stands by itself in the pretty garden-like grounds of the prison, some little way from the building wherein are situated the two condemned cells, so that a murderer going to his end, has a walk in the open air of about forty yards. The building itself resembles a fairly large coach-house. At the side the prisoner enters, there are large double doors and the scaffold is on a level with the road, so that there are no stairs for the condemned man to go up. He just steps in through the door, and he is on the platform before he knows it.

On the opposite side to which the prisoner has entered, is a similar large pair of doors. Like all the doors of the building they are kept carefully locked, and when an execution is taking place,

these are only opened as to their upper halves, and about twenty yards beyond, the Press representatives, who are seeing the job carried out, stand. From their position they don't see a great deal.

The procession from the condemned cell to the gallows moves quickly, for the chief actor is usually in a decided hurry to get his portion of the business over. The chaplain leads the way repeating the Burial Service, and the condemned man comes close behind, then follow the executioner and his assistant, the senior warder, one or two other officers, and finally the Governor.

The murderer walks on to the platform, puts his feet as directed on some white chalk marks made for his guidance by the executioner, the cap is pulled over his eyes, a lever at the side like that in a railway signal-box is pulled, and all is over. The newspaper men have only seen the upper half of the man's body as he stands in position, and a second later there is nothing visible but a swinging and jerking rope.

The condemned man, when the lever is pulled, falls down into a whitewashed brick chamber, to which access is gained by a small flight of stairs. The whole business is over very quickly, and apart from the jumpiness of the entire idea, there is really very little to see in a present-day execution, performed as it is at Maidstone, and no doubt elsewhere. Still it is not a pleasant spectacle and,

as it usually occurs at eight in the morning, does not tend to make one regard one's breakfast with as friendly an eye as customary.

After receiving my letter from Marwood with his delicately suggested hope that we might not meet professionally, I was haunted by the belief that by some chance or other, by some unforeseen turn of Fate, we *might* come to meet in the manner indicated. It was therefore with a certain relief that in due course I read in the papers that he was no more.

The late Sir Augustus Harris of Drury Lane who was an exceedingly superstitious man, for some reason or other regarded the hangman's letter as an emblem of good luck, and as I did not attach any special consequence to it in that way, I duly presented it to him, to his great satisfaction. I don't know whether it had anything to do with his Drury Lane successes or not. Perhaps it had ; you never can tell.

Among the many things Augustus Harris did during his tenure of the Lane, was the elaborating of the ceremony of cutting the Baddeley cake on Twelfth Night on the stage, after the performance of the pantomime had finished. Poor "Gus," who always did things of the kind, very handsomely, used to invite all the interesting people in London on these occasions. The guests were wont to assemble in the auditorium of the big theatre, and at the correct time the curtain went up dis-

closing one of the big scenes of the pantomime, the foreground filled with long supper tables. On a place of honour the cake reposed, and then "Gus" used to step down to the footlights and bid us welcome. Usually he called upon Mr. James Fernandez to cut the cake, and then he summoned us on to the stage, and up we came by means of steps, set at either corner thereof.

Then we supped and danced to the music of one of the Guards' bands, and had a good time till it was getting on for the period at which next morning's show was due to start. I always wondered how the pantomime company got through that performance. They were certainly giants in those days!

Latterly Harris found that his list of guests was increasing to so inordinate an extent, that he dropped the function altogether, and Mr. Arthur Collins who succeeded him in the control of "The National Theatre," as "Gus" loved to call Drury Lane, wisely contents himself with just carrying out the requirements of the Baddeley Bequest.

If there is one thing more remarkable than another it is out of what a small beginning a great fortune may arise. Some thirty years ago I was one afternoon walking down Ludgate Hill, when a peculiarly cut-throat looking ruffian, pushing an odd looking little paper before my eyes, what time he made a clumsy and unsuccessful dive for my watch, said in hoarse tones, "'Ere y'are

gov'nor, fust number er the noo piper 'Hawnsers fer Korrispondinks.' "

I did not particularly desire the addition to the week's literature, but I bought the paper, and being further enlightened by my friend that he was "storving," likewise that he had only come out of "jug" the previous day, I took him to an adjacent hostelry, and there filled him as full as he could hold, of bread and cheese and beer, what time he gave me the material out of which I subsequently built a highly successful "Prison Experiences" article, which later on adorned the pages of a paper of great circulation, and resulted in the receipt of three guineas by your servant.

"Hawnsers fer Korrispondinks" was the first number of *Answers*, then called *Answers to Correspondents*, and certainly no paper could have looked less like proving a success than *Answers* did in its earliest stages. Yet out of that unlikely beginning has grown the biggest newspaper and publishing business the world has ever seen.

The editor and chief proprietor of *Answers* was my very good friend, Lord Northcliffe, then Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, and there is no need to tell here of the wonders he and those with him have created in newspaper-land and elsewhere. How many journals in London and the country the Associated Newspapers' Limited, and the other Harmsworth Companies own and control, in addition to *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The*

*Evening News*, I do not profess to know, but it is interesting to reflect that they all grew out of "Hawnsers fer Korrispondinks," while of course the great fortune owned by the Harmsworth family, as well as the peerages of the two elder brothers, Alfred and Harold, so deservedly bestowed upon them, owe a good deal one way and another to that curious and unlikely beginning. Lord Rothermere I only once met at luncheon in his brother's house, but Lord Northcliffe I have had the good fortune to know well for many years, and I can vouch for the fact that with enough to turn the heads of a dozen or a hundred ordinary people, no man was ever less spoilt by stupendous success than the one-time Alfred Harmsworth, who remains to-day, to his earlier friends, the same kindly natured, big-hearted fellow he always was, and no doubt always will be.

One day Mr. Charles Cochran, the famous theatrical manager, says that he will accomplish his pet design and give London a circus, with all the ancient glories thereof revived, and a number of new ones added.

The last circus we had in London was that which Mr. Cochran gave us at Olympia, some years back, when Mr. Charles Sugden, the well-known actor, became for the time, the nattiest of ring-masters possible. With the exception of the Hippodrome at its start, when it possessed an arena, Wolff's Circus at Hengler's, now the Palla-

dium, and the Barnum and Bailey Show at Olympia, we have not had a big old-time circus in Central London since the Covent Garden venture, which was run by a syndicate, under the management of Bill Holland, of the wonderful moustache.

It was at the Covent Garden Circus, that Cinquevalli, the remarkable juggler, first caught the attention of London, and among the other notable people in the company whom "the Peoples' Caterer" collected, were George Batty, the jockey-act rider, Hernandez, and the beautiful Oceana.

Batty's appearance in his jockey-act was always very popular, and one night when King Edward visited the circus, Batty sought to pay him a delicate compliment by appearing in the Royal racing colours. A costumier and his assistants were instantly set to work to make a jacket and cap of the Royal colours with all possible speed, and Batty's performance was put back in the programme so as to give the tailors all the time possible. Then a tragic thing happened. Just as the garments were completed and Batty was ready to enter the arena, the Prince, as he then was, remembering that he had to go on somewhere or other, left the box with the members of his suite.

I always think it was a great pity someone could not have explained the circumstances to the Royal visitor. He was usually so considerate and good-natured that I am sure he would have con-

tinued his stay for a few minutes, if he had only known how much trouble poor Batty had taken to please him.

A circus is usually a fairly costly thing to run, in London at least, for of course the performers have to be people at the head of their profession, and the salaries they command for their frequently very dangerous performances are large. Circus performers are not tied to any country by reason of language. The whole world is open to them, and if you talk to any circus artist of experience, you will invariably find that he or she has travelled to the most unlikely places. But even if circus expenses are very large, they cannot well be more so than the running of the big and gorgeous revues at several of our largest and best known theatres, for in many cases the salaries paid are prodigious—and ridiculous. Not so long ago a revue which was then playing to £1500 a week was taken off because it did not pay to keep it on! Ridiculous you will say, no doubt; and so it is, but it is the truth. What do you say to the salaries of the leading man and leading lady including their matinée performances, coming to just £1000 a week together. That's another fact.

How much can there be left for the salaries of all the other principals of a large company, for the big chorus, the orchestra, stage hands, staff in front of the house, lighting, advertising, rent, and the thousand and one other charges?



I well recall how George Edwardes told me during the run of *An Artist's Model* at Daly's, that though his production looked to be doing well, he was actually losing money. "How can it be otherwise," he said. "I've got to make £1400 each week before I can touch a penny for myself."

In those days expenses of £1400 a week were, as you see, considered enormous, and wellnigh suicidal, by so skilled and experienced a manager as George Edwardes, but as anyone with any sort of knowledge of the matter is well aware, such figures would not be considered at all out of the way at the present time.

Salaries are enormous and preposterous, and equally of course there is bound to be a big slump in them when the revue craze dies the death, and the keen competition for the services of certain comedians comes to an end. On the other hand of course the labourer is worthy of his hire, and if an actor can command the salary of an Archbishop and a Lord Chief Justice rolled into one, it would be folly of him to refuse to accept it, and no doubt managers who pay these salaries don't do so for any other reason than that they consider it worth their while. If they did not you may be quite sure they wouldn't pay them, for theatrical managers, such of them as I know at any rate, are not as a rule fond of giving themselves or anything else away to any great extent.

## CHAPTER XVII

Journalists of the past and the present—Edmund Yates of *The World*—How I first met him—"A good low-comedy face"—More than that needed for an actor—A great friend and a disciple of Dickens—Why I did not go on the Stage—Mr. Labouchere and *Truth*—How I was able to help "Labby"—The syndicate which wanted to purchase *Truth*—How King Edward and "Labby" agreed to differ for a time—Cherchez la femme!—How George Lewis set things right again—Briefing a future Lord Chief Justice—"A young fellow named Isaacs"—How the "young fellow" won his case—Another co-religionist of a very different type—Ernest Benzon, the Jubilee Plunger—The man who got through a great fortune in record time—Owners' tips—Fred Archer's triple tip—Matthew Dawson's superstition—The laying of the foundation-stone of Daly's Theatre—How Bill Yardley suffered on the occasion—How Harry Grattan and I wrote a musical comedy—Our stringent terms—An early revue which might have been produced at the Alhambra and wasn't.

**I**N these days, when so many newspaper articles are signed, and when one reads so much about writers, the reading public knows a good deal more than it used to about the personalities of those who help to form its opinions. In earlier days there was rather more anonymity than now prevails, but among the very well-known editors, whom everyone knew more or less about, were Edmund Yates of *The World* and Henry Labouchere of *Truth*.

I shall ever have a kindly feeling for the former

journal, for it was in it that the first article I ever had accepted by a London paper, appeared. I was a youngster, who had not long arrived in London, and the series of "Celebrities at Home" which appeared each week in *The World* was its leading feature; and thus it was flying at high game for a beginner to turn his 'prentice hand to one of them.

I knew one celebrity very well, Dr. Thorold, at that time Bishop of Rochester, who afterwards succeeded to the See of Winchester, and I ventured to write to Mr. Yates, an old friend of my father, though a stranger to me, and suggest the Bishop as a likely subject for his famous series. He replied briefly that I could "have a try if I liked." So I had my try, scored a goal, and in due course got, to my considerable surprise, five guineas for my article. I received a good deal less than that, let me say, for many subsequent articles in other journals.

It is just conceivable that the fact of Bishop Thorold being the brother-in-law of Mr. Labouchere of *Truth*, had something to do with my article being accepted, for the good "Atlas" did not as a rule attach great consequence to clerical subjects. Edmund Yates had many friends—and many enemies, and as "Dagonet" once truthfully wrote of him "he was one of the most loyal likers and the best haters."

Later on I came to know the *World's* first and

greatest chief very well indeed ; and certainly never had young man kinder friend than he was to me. My first meeting with him was curious. I was at the time, and, no doubt, am so still, one of the worst possible amateur actors in the world, but was then greatly smitten with the idea of adopting the Stage as a profession. I knew that Mr. Yates was a power in the theatrical world, and so I induced one who knew him well, to write to him on my behalf, and ascertain if he could and would help my ambitions.

Mr. Yates wrote to me very kindly, in the pleasant violet ink which he, like most of the other of "Dickens' young men," always used, telling me to come and see him on the following Sunday at Thames Lawn, Great Marlow, where he was then living ; and I went.

I was, in those days, a very shy youth, and my terror was abject when on reaching the house I found I had to walk through a garden in which were seated a number of famous people who, from their photographs, I had no difficulty in recognising, as Miss Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, Toole, Frank Burnand, then editor of *Punch*, Sir Squire Bancroft, and sundry others. However, taking my courage in both hands, I pushed the garden gate open, and walked towards the house, the observed—or so I imagined—of all Mr. Yates's guests.

I particularly noticed among those who were

sitting on the lawn, a very big, handsome, pleasant faced man, who was in the middle of telling what seemed to be an amusing story, to several people who were near him, and as at the moment Miss Terry dealt him a playful blow on the arm, calling out as she did so, "Nonsense, Edmund, nonsense," I gathered that here was my host.

The big man suddenly became aware of my awkward presence, and came over to me saying, "You are ——?" and I replied that I was my humble self. Then came the kindest of welcomes.

"And so," said Mr. Yates, "you want to go on the Stage?" Then, turning me round, he placed both his hands on my shoulders, gazed at me intently and spoke the words which I shall never forget—"You know you are not a bit like your father—but you've a damned good low-comedy face!"

After that the ice was quite broken and I was as happy as possible, for all the eminent people to whom I was presented were most kind, and the day was, for me, a very memorable one.

Mr. Yates was always a good friend, and a wise adviser to me. As everyone knows, he was a keen disciple of Charles Dickens, whom he justly regarded as a sort of god, and the fact that I knew most of the great novelist's works very intimately, and was able to stand a fairly stiff cross-examination about them, did me no harm with him.

Mr. Yates would no doubt have helped me on to

the boards, for his influence was great, but just about then there came the unfortunate paragraph in *The World* which led to the famous criminal libel action, and to his incarceration in Holloway Prison as a first-class misdemeanant for four months. How the paragraph in question came to be written by a contributor ; how in the hurry of business it found its way into *The World* after Mr. Yates having read it in proof, had decided on its excision ; and much else is old history. As a matter of fact, Mr. Yates only remained in Holloway for seven weeks, for his health broke down, and his release was ordered.

Sometime later, a great banquet was given at the Criterion, to welcome Mr. Yates on his return to freedom, and to congratulate him on his restoration to health. Lord Brabourne presided, and the two hundred guests included a number of the most influential men in England.

All this put a finish to my half-hearted ideas of the Stage as a career, which was unquestionably a very good thing for me, for though I have, in my considerable experience as a dramatic critic, seen a number of bad actors, I make bold to say, that I never beheld one who by any stretch of imagination could have been as wicked a performer as I am thoroughly convinced I should have been.

Mr. Labouchere I had not the good fortune to know at all intimately. Indeed only on one

or two occasions had I even a moderately lengthy talk with the chief of *Truth*, and the first of those was, to me at least, an interesting one. This is how it came about.

Mr. Horace Voules, who was for so long manager of *Truth*, and who was, in a variety of ways, Mr. Labouchere's very intimate right-hand man, one day wrote to me, that "Labby" would like to see me on a matter if I would call upon him at a certain time which he named, and so I went.

I found Mr. Labouchere exceedingly pleasant, and not at all the sort of man I had been led to expect. He came to cues very quickly, and started promptly by saying "So-and-so is a damned scoundrel and I am going to tell him he is. I believe you can set me right on one or two small matters about him, and I'll be glad if you will do so." As I agreed with Mr. Labouchere in his estimate of the hero in question, I gave him the information he wanted with ready satisfaction.

"But knowing all this," said "Labby," "why didn't you use it yourself—it's useful stuff." "Because," I said, "although it is all true enough, he is a wealthy man; my paper is still young and making its way, and I can't afford a big libel action, which would certainly be started if I wrote anything of the kind. Even if I won the action, you know a good deal better than I do what it would cost me. That's my reason." "And a devilish good reason, too," said the sage

of Carteret Street. "Well, I'll tackle him ; and if he goes for me, he'll have George Lewis and Charles Russell against him as well."

Later on the person in question was "tackled" to a very considerable extent by Mr. Labouchere, and an action for libel followed, wherein his legal luminaries were as he said they would be, Mr. George Lewis and Sir Charles Russell as they then were, and the result was that as usual, in most actions of the kind brought against him, Mr. Labouchere won hands down, for he, and Lewis, and Russell, were an uncommonly tough trio for anyone to run up against.

I mind me well at the time of our meeting, as I was leaving, Mr. Labouchere said in his curious drawling way, "Oh, by the way, you know — well, don't you?" mentioning a certain distinguished Churchman, who was a relative of his own, and I told him that the Prelate in question was a great friend of my father, and that he had been very kind to me.

"He is a curious creature," was the comment ; then he added, with one of his whimsical smiles, "I wonder what he thinks of me," and, casting prudence to the winds, I absolutely could not help saying what I knew to be the case, and quoting the title of a very popular song with which the "Great Macdermott" was at the time delighting audiences at the old Pavilion, "Not much!" I fancy I expected him to be angry



with me, but he wasn't at all. He merely laughed, and seemed quite to approve of my rather cheeky retort.

On another occasion, I met him when I was commissioned to see, if it were possible, to purchase *Truth* on behalf of a small syndicate, possessed of considerable wealth and influence; but at that time "Labby" was not inclined to sell, except at such a figure, and under such conditions, as made negotiations impossible.

One thinks of him as one saw him then and on another occasion, exquisitely neat, soft-voiced, and soft-mannered, his fine eyes sparkling with mischief, as he reached a hand to the silver gilt—or was it gold?—net filled with cigarettes which hung from the wall of his delightful study in Westminster. The house is turned into offices now, I fancy. His room was that which you see from Old Palace Yard, rising on the turf of the Abbey. He said, and I daresay truly, that he could hear the organ faintly booming as he wrote. The juxtaposition delighted his peculiar humour, like his relationship to good Bishop Thorold of Winchester.

"Labby" was a friend of King Edward—at one time an intimate friend—but for a period they were anything but amicably inclined towards one another, although in after years, the King sent Sir George Lewis to see him, and by his ministrations, peace once more reigned.

The cause of the quarrel was mainly on account of a lady, a well-known Society beauty in her day, who took to the Stage, and in whose career King Edward showed a considerable amount of interest. The lady, as many will recollect, went to play in America, and Mrs. Labouchere, who had been a very material help, by reason of her own previous stage experience, as Miss Henrietta Hodson, went with her.

Then came a rift within the lute between the two dames ; there was a quarrel, the prime cause of which need not be recalled here ; and Mrs. Labouchere returned to England. " Labby " naturally took his wife's side of the matter ; King Edward was very loyal to his fair friend, and thus he and " Labby " agreed to differ—and did differ very considerably for a time. They were friends, however, for a good many years before King Edward's death.

Talking of George Lewis and Sir Charles Russell, who, as everyone remembers, became Lord Chief Justice of England, I recall with interest the only time another Lord Chief appeared on my behalf.

A friend of mine came to me one day with a pitiable tale concerning a certain small action with which he was threatened, and sought my advice. I told him to go and see Mr. Lewis, as he then was, and said I would be responsible for all costs in the matter. I believed the defence to be a very simple and straightforward one, and so

it proved to be, for on the day of the action, I went round from my office in Fetter Lane, to the adjacent Law Courts, to hear the matter tried, and in the passage outside the court, the lawyer's clerk told me that Mr. Lewis considered he had a perfectly good defence to the matter in hand, and that he had briefed "a young fellow named Isaacs" to do the needful talking. "It will only be a matter of five guineas for him," he added. Mr. Lewis had a high opinion of the "young fellow named Isaacs," the clerk said, and he personally had no doubt whatsoever that he would do the trick both promptly and well.

And so he did; for when the case was called the "young fellow" in question went for the opposition in most excellent fashion, and won his case easily. "The young fellow named Isaacs" some years later became famous as Sir Rufus Isaacs, and anon as Lord Reading, Lord Chief Justice of England.

As everyone of course knows, Lord Reading comes of a very ancient and honourable race, and thinking of one Hebrew who has made so much of his life, and accomplished such great things, one turns to another of the same faith, who made a sad mess of his wonderful and golden chances.

Ernest Benzon is only a name in these times, but in his brief day "the Jubilee Plunger" was one of the most written of and talked about men in the world. He came into an immense fortune

and managed to gallop through it, in what must be record time. His "Waterloo" was achieved much more by means of cards than by betting on horse races, and although the gambling instinct was born in him to an extraordinary extent, it is a very sure thing that the crowd he got amongst had a deal to do with his ruin.

At first he was a flat, pure and simple. Later on he became what is known as a "fly flat," which is merely another variety of the genus "mug." In the days of his prosperity and notoriety he was a very tall thin young man, who wore inordinately high collars, dressed conspicuously, and revelled in the sensation he created as he went about. It was music in his ears to hear people say to one another as he passed them, "That's The Jubilee!" He thoroughly liked the notoriety as he told me himself, and didn't mind paying uncommonly dearly for it. And yet "The Jubilee" wasn't altogether an ass. He could talk quite cleverly upon a variety of subjects when he got among men, as he occasionally did, who didn't care for cards, and who believed there were more fascinating pursuits than losing money to sharps, amateur as well as professional.

One night he, another, and myself were supping at the old Gardenia Club, somewhat late, and suddenly "The Jubilee," who had been rather subdued, said, "I'm going to tell you something which will surprise a lot of people. I'm broke!"

Of course we thought he was joking, and the third man who was present and who is now a distinguished General, said, "Humbug, Jubilee, you're kidding." "Devil a bit," he replied, "you'll read all about it in the evening papers to-morrow. All I ask you is that neither of you will say a word about it to a soul, till you do." And of course we promised.

The account of his smash made no end of a sensation when the papers came out with the news the following evening, and was the subject of conversation all over the country.

Gambling to any extent, for some reason or other, never had the smallest fascination for me, and Benzon always struck me as a human curiosity. I could not help saying to him, "How on earth did you come to lose all your money? You had an immense fortune. If you won, you were already so well off that doing so couldn't make a scrap of difference to you ; while by losing as you have done, you have wrecked yourself in every way."

His answer was curious. He said, "I quite see the force of what you say, and perhaps you will hardly believe me, when I tell you that if I had another fortune I'd do it all over again." And no doubt he would have done it too, for gambling, as he did it, was nothing more nor less than a particular form of insanity. He was normal enough on most other matters, but when it came to

any sort of game of chance, or betting, the man was nothing other than a lunatic. When I told him as much he only laughed. "No doubt you're right," he said. "I expect we are all mad about something or other."

The Jubilee juggins was nobody's enemy but his own, and did nobody any harm but himself. He had few enemies, and when you come to think things over, it is a very open matter whether a spendthrift who distributes his money as quickly as possible with both hands, doesn't do more good to his fellow-men than the careful soul who saves his portion all his life, and then leaves it to his successor who may be just as discreet. Extravagance is, no doubt, a bad thing—for the extravagant person—it may do a deal of good to those who merely come in contact with it.

Talking of contact, in connection with the "Jubilee" recalls an occasion when Benzon just escaped being somewhat badly hurt, and that was in the very earliest stages of the building which became Daly's Theatre.

When the foundation-stone of this playhouse was well and truly laid one fine morning a good many years ago, Miss Ada Rehan, who was Augustine Daly's leading lady, duly smashed a bottle of champagne on the stone for luck, and in so doing very nearly brought disaster upon me. As it was, I was merely considerably sprinkled with the wine, but Bill Yardley, the famous

University cricketer and dramatic critic—he was “Bill of the Play” of *The Sporting Times* of that period—suffered a good deal more than I did. Just as Miss Rehan hurled her bottle against the stone, I turned my head to speak to Benzon, who was immediately behind me, and in that moment a large fragment of broken bottle whizzed past me so closely that I felt the wind it created. Cecil Raleigh had a tiny portion of the extreme point of his nose removed by it, and poor Bill Yardley, who was just behind, received the piece of glass right on his forehead over his eye, with the result that he was badly cut and bled like a stuck pig for some time afterwards. Miss Rehan was greatly upset by the happening, and some of those present regarded it as a very unfortunate omen for Daly. As many will recollect Daly’s subsequent season was not very fortunate, and in due course he let the theatre to George Edwardes, to whom it proved a veritable gold mine.

My earlier reference to Benzon has recalled to my mind several racing incidents and anecdotes. The actual value or otherwise of tips, and in this regard I vividly recall one of the Hurst Park Meetings of a few years ago, when I lunched with Mr. Joseph Davis who has been so long connected with the famous Hampton Court Race Course. Knowing that of necessity Mr. Davis must be familiar with all there was to know about the big race of the day, I felt a bit reluctant about asking

him for the probable winner of it. It seemed 'so like asking for, and then betting on, a certainty. However, Mr. Davis was an old friend and so I mustered up courage to do what was necessary, for it is a plain fact that if you don't get much by asking for it, you get nothing at all by refraining from doing so.

It is, as everyone knows, not considered the right thing to bother owners about their horses' chances at a meeting, but the late George Edwardes, Mr. W. B. Purefoy, and Mr. Sol Joel, were old friends, and so I thought I might venture to invite their opinions as to the likelihood of their various candidates doing what was expected of them in their various races that afternoon.

Any one who knows anything at all about racing will allow, that I could not have sought advice from four more distinguished "Heads" than these gentlemen, and as each of them was a pal, and as my infinitesimal investments could not possibly have affected the market, you may take it that I got very straight and well meant advice.

And now here is what actually happened. In no single case did one of these four horses win. In no single case was one placed. So much for the owners' side on that day at least !

However, against this, let me say that at one Brighton meeting I met Fred Archer, the greatest jockey who ever lived, at a dinner party.

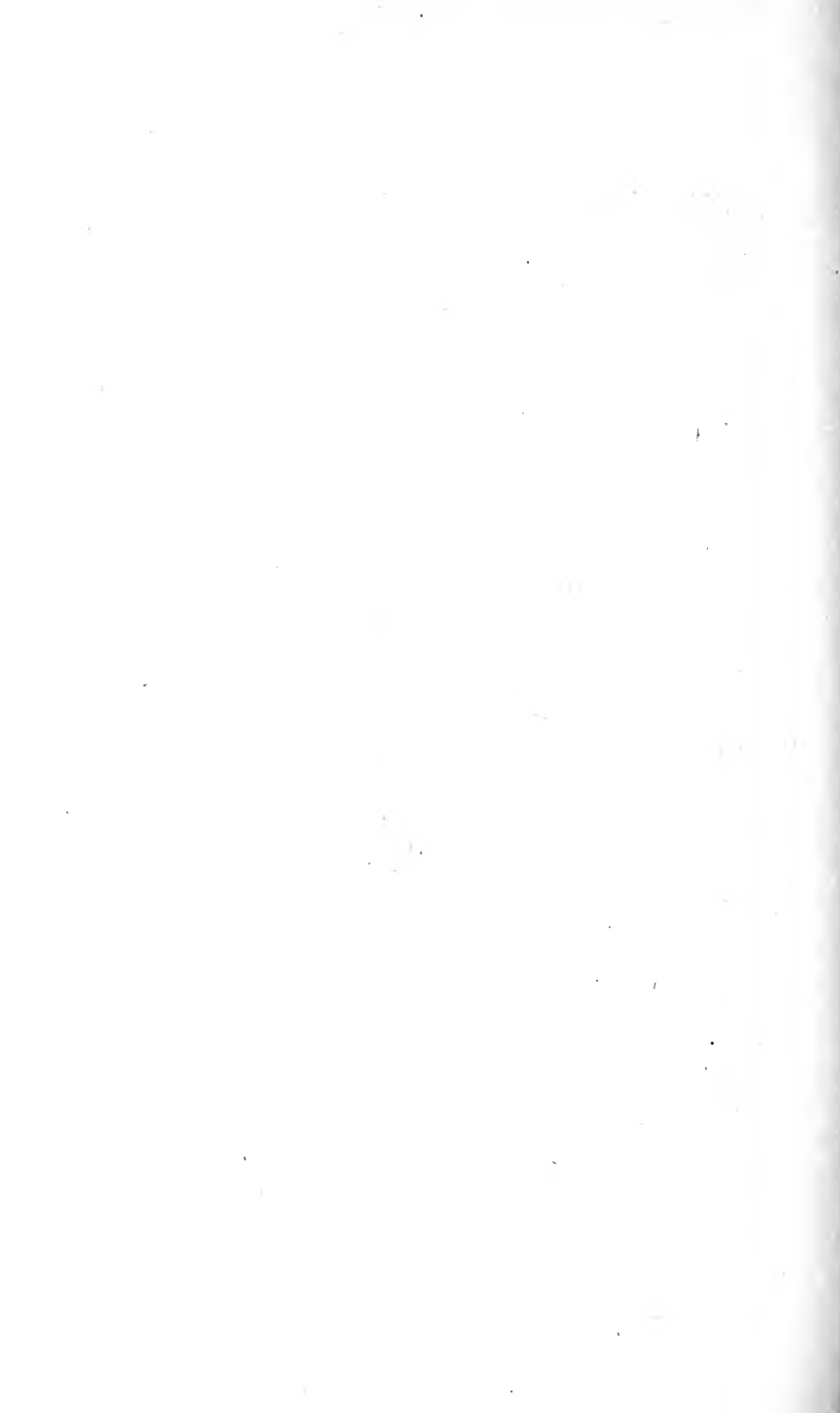




*Photo.*

*Sherborne, Newmarket*

FRED ARCHER, THE KING OF JOCKEYS



Archer had of course been riding that day, and was going to ride next day as well, wherefore the abstemious "Tinman's" share of that admirable banquet, consisted exactly and precisely of two spoonsful of clear soup, and one small piece of toast, after which he was allowed by our hostess to smoke a big cigar while the rest of us did ourselves very well indeed.

I was quite a lad at the time, and had lost a good deal more than I ought to have done over the first day's racing, and told Archer as much in course of conversation.

It has often been said of Archer that he never—or hardly ever—gave tips of any sort or kind. All I can say to this is that on the occasion referred to, he was good enough to tell me quietly of three races, each of which, bar accidents, he would in all probability win on the morrow.

I duly backed those three mounts of his; each of them won; and I got back what I had lost, and made a comfortable bit as well. And so after all there may be something in tips sometimes.

But of course you must first catch your Archer!

Talking of Archer recalls the fact that it was common history at one time he might have married a certain Duchess, a good lady who was in her day a famous owner of race-horses, and who certainly had a considerable admiration for "THE TINMAN." The story went that the famous jockey only declined the matrimonial

proposition made to him, on ascertaining that the union would not give him the brevet rank of a Duke! He was a wealthy man, and but for heavy betting losses during the last two or three years of his life, might have died either a millionaire, or something very closely approaching one.

Like most other jockeys Archer began his career at the very bottom of the ladder, tended the copper fire, and bore a hand at the meanest drudgery in connection with stable work, and my late friend, Edward Spencer Mott, familiar for many years on the sporting press under his signature of "Nathaniel Gubbins," who knew Archer well, thus described his first introduction to him. Mott was out at exercise one morning with Matthew Dawson, the famous trainer of so many Derby winners. "There," he said in course of conversation, "is a boy who ought to get on. His father rode the winner of a Grand National, and the son is not only a stranger to fear, but has the hands and seat of a Chiffney. Come here, boy," and a slim youth with prominent buck teeth, seated on a big raw-boned bay, fell out of the "string," and approached his master with a respectful touch of his cap.

"Take your horse over that fence," was the order given. Over went the horse, and on the command to "Come back over it," the action was repeated. That boy was Frederick Archer, who was apprenticed to Mr. Dawson at the age

of eleven at a salary of seven guineas at the first year, rising to thirteen guineas for the fourth and fifth years.

It is curious to think of Archer, the brilliant genius who controlled so many destinies, accepting a wage of seven guineas with a yearly rig-out of a hat, coat, and waistcoat! At the zenith of his career there could not have been a keener man at making money—hence his nickname.

Of Archer's tragic end there is no need to tell here, for everyone knows how he committed suicide while temporarily insane, and there can be no question but that his last illness was caused in great measure by the terribly severe means he took to keep weight down.

Reference to Matthew Dawson, most famous of trainers, recalls the fact that he was like most racing men peculiarly superstitious. I do not know if "Auld Mat," who originally hailed from Gullane in Scotland, was ultra-particular about walking under ladders, or spilling salt, and things of the kind, but I do know that he was peculiarly sensitive about certain other matters, and would have promptly abandoned any undertaking which he had set out to accomplish, if a hare had run across his path.

One morning after he had left his training quarters for the nearest station, with two or three horses engaged next day at the Epsom Spring Meeting, a solitary magpie—that bird of ill-omen

—put in an appearance directly in the path of the “string.”

“Mat” waited for a second or two, before calling to his head lad. “D’ye see anither ane, Geordie?” and, as politicians so often say, the reply was “in the negative.”

“Yer sure there was jist ane?”

“Only one, sir,” was the answer.”

“Tak them hame then,” said the trainer. “We’ll no travel the day.” And they did not, but returned to Compton, coming back twenty-four hours later, when no magpie was to be seen.

And it is to be recorded that on that very day, Cannobie, one of the “string,” won the Great Metropolitan Handicap at Epsom from twelve opponents.

What would have happened if the horse had been taken to Epsom on the previous day in spite of the encounter with the magpie, is not for me to say.

During the time I edited a more or less theatrical paper, I was often asked why I did not write a play, as if the doing of such a thing was as easy of accomplishment as tumbling off a roof. No doubt, owing to my position, I might have managed to get any play I had written, at least looked at, but there, in all probability, the matter would have ended, and I should have had my work for nothing, which is always a highly unsatis-

factory thing to one possessed of at least some sort of market, to which he may drive his pigs. Moreover, to write a successful play, seems to me just about as difficult a thing to do as to ascend from Ludgate Circus to the top of St. Paul's on a tight rope.

The only experience I ever had of play-writing was when a certain syndicate, some years ago, suggested to my old friend, Mr. Harry Grattan, and myself, that they had lots of money, a theatre which would shortly be at their disposal, and an actress in whose abilities and attractiveness a portion of the syndicate professed confidence and admiration.

For some reason or other, this collective body of dramatic enthusiasts opined that Mr. Grattan, who had not then begun to write his famous revues, and my humble self were the right and only people in their opinion, capable of building a musical-comedy suitable to their requirements.

Mr. Grattan was good enough to leave the business arrangements to me, and I, being no gambler, and essentially as well as literally Scotch, somewhat paralysed the syndicate by declining to work except on the conditions that for our scenario, if accepted, we should receive a certain sum down ; a further sum upon the acceptance of the first act ; more when the second act was finished and approved of ; and after production certain other fees.

You see I thought it was about a thousand to one against the piece being produced, whether the syndicate liked it or not, and considered that something on account was at any rate infinitely better than a push in the eye with a blunt stick.

The Syndicate which certainly had little reason to consider it had much of worldly wisdom to learn, and which, by the way, included a couple of money-lenders and a solicitor, expressed the opinion that our suggestions were most irregular and quite ridiculous ; we retorted that we hadn't come to them but they to us, and that if they desired to become possessed of our sparkling masterpiece, these and none other were our terms. And the syndicate stood them, greatly to our surprise !

Perhaps it would be more correct to say they partly stood them, for they liked the scenario when it was read to them, and considerably startled us by paying for it. The first act was approved of, and duly settled for, and when the second was read, they liked that also, and asked us to leave it with them " for further consideration " ; but the requisite and agreed upon coin of the realm not being forthcoming, we carted our act off again, and after a month's delay, and much spirited correspondence, the syndicate discovered that after all perhaps it wasn't quite so wealthy as it had believed itself to be, and quietly wound itself up.



So the great work was never produced, and probably never will be ; not that this matters to any special extent, for I fancy we got all it was worth. The chief moral to be deduced from this seems to me, that if you are ever writing plays, or doing anything else for a syndicate, have your money as far ahead as possible, or the syndicate may perchance have you.

Everyone knows that Mr. Grattan is to-day one of the most successful revue authors we possess, and in the first of his efforts in this way, at a time when revues were comparatively unknown quantities in this country, I had the privilege of collaborating with him.

In this case we got as far as our scenario, and that I placed before my good friend, Mr. Alfred Moul, who was at that time managing-director of the Alhambra. He gave the matter of producing our work at the big Leicester Square House his serious consideration. In the end, however, nothing came of the deal, for Mr. Moul and his fellow-directors formed the opinion that though our ideas seemed good enough, the times were not then ripe for introducing revues to the London public with reasonable prospects of successful returns. Indeed, the majority of the Board who sat in judgment on our scheme were of opinion that revue would not pay at all in London generally, and at the Alhambra in particular. As events proved not very long afterwards, the Board

was wrong. Revues became, and are still very popular, and Mr. Grattan has, since he started writing them, proved himself to be a past master at the game. Our piece might have been all right. You never can tell !

## CHAPTER XVIII

What John Hollingshead said about unlucky theatres—"Practical John"—The ill-fortune of the Olympic—Concerning the Opera Comique and the Old Globe—D'Oyly Carte's first success—The Olympic as a music-hall—How Wilson Barrett came to Wych Street—How he also nearly reached Carey Street by so doing!—His subsequent triumph with *The Sign of the Cross*—The Kingsway and its numerous other names—The Court Theatre in former days—A big success at little Terry's—Mr. Charles Hawtrey's triumph with *The Private Secretary*—How Sir Herbert Tree appeared as The Rev. Robert Spalding—How Penley followed him in the part—An extraordinary success—Rare Fred Leslie!—A change from romantic opera to Gaiety musical-comedy—The Gaiety almost a stock company theatre—How Mr. Seymour Hicks and Miss Ellaline Terriss came to the Gaiety—The George Grossmith period—A very successful management.

HE was no less a light of theatrical management than John Hollingshead, predecessor of George Edwardes at the old Gaiety Theatre, which stood where the present offices of the *Morning Post* now are, who could never be brought to believe that there was such a thing in this world as an unlucky theatre.

"Practical John" as he used to be called, though he was in many ways the most unpractical as well as the kindest of men, held the belief that "if the Public wanted to see any particular play they would go through a drain to do so."

No doubt there is a measure of truth in this, but no one will think otherwise than that a piece will have much more likelihood of blossoming into a success if produced at a popular well situated theatre, than if it sees light for the first time in one out of favour; and it is certainly curious how unfortunate some theatres were—and are.

There was no greater instance of this than that of the old Olympic, though neither the Globe nor the Opera Comique, its near neighbours, were much luckier, despite the fact that at the former Mr. Charles Hawtrey made at least one fortune with *The Private Secretary*, and that at the latter Mr. George Edwardes did well with the burlesque *Joan-of-Arc*, and prior to that D'Oyly Carte began his wonderful managerial career there. These were, however, outstanding exceptions in a considerable tale of financial un-success.

The Olympic was a veritable fortune swallower. When Mr. Henry Neville had his season there, backed by a former Lord Londesborough, grandfather of the present peer, considerable money was dropped, and many who came after lost large sums. Mrs. Conover spent most of what she possessed in this house, and Miss Agnes Hewitt, despite the production of *The Pointsman*, the best thing Mr. Cecil Raleigh and Mr. Claude Carton collaborated in, and with a company which included Mr. Willard, Miss Maud Milton,

and many other fine actors, lost a fortune, after the critics had proclaimed the piece one of the strongest dramas ever written, and had foretold the change of luck now assured to the theatre.

The Olympic was, after sundry other managers had burnt their fingers with it, turned into a music-hall, when General Playfair, father of Mr. Arthur Playfair, was one of the directors, but despite the fact that strong bills were offered, the Public stayed away in enormous numbers, and the idea came to an end. Then, having partly rebuilt and re-decorated the house, Mr. Wilson Barrett, at that time one of the most popular actors in London with a great personal following, came to the Olympic and produced there the identical plays which had crowded the old Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street.

The net result of these revivals was that he lost many thousands of pounds, and left the place wellnigh ruined, till fortune again came to him when he wrote and produced *The Sign of the Cross* at the Lyric. If he had presented that marvellously successful piece at the Olympic, I for one believe it would have proved a failure. Fortunately he did not do so.

Another theatre which for a considerable time failed to achieve the luck it deserved is the Kingsway. Of course I know that *Fanny's First Play* and sundry other productions had longish runs, and that Miss Lena Ashwell produced some

good plays which lasted fairly well during her management of the theatre, but it is, I believe, a familiar thing to most people who know anything at all of theatreland, that Miss Ashwell made no fortune out of the place, despite the plucky fight she made for success there.

The famous Mr. W. S. Penley lost a deal of the fortune he had made out of *Charley's Aunt* when he purchased the theatre, re-built it in part, and called it Penley's, and certainly Mrs. Churchill-Jodrell failed to set the Thames on fire during her tenancy of the place when Colonel Sargeant managed for her, and when the theatre was known as The Jodrell.

In its earlier days the place had been known as the Novelty and was controlled at one time by the first Mrs. Horace Sedger, who was Miss Nellie Harris, sister of Augustus of Drury Lane. Miss Harris, who had the advantage of her brother's assistance, produced a very amusing farce by Mr. T. G. Warren called *Nita's First* followed by the burlesque *Lallah Rook*, in which Kate Vaughan and a strong company appeared, but the success of the double bill was not a great one, and the Harris management came to an end.

This is all for the greater part somewhat ancient history of course, still it does seem to point to the fact that some theatres do appear to be heavily handicapped somehow or other, though

the ill luck which comes to them may not always have been there.

The Court, for example, is an instance of this. Of late years it has not been specially fortunate, and yet at one time, during the period that Sir Arthur Pinero was coming into his kingdom as an author, and when the company included Mrs. John Wood, Arthur Cecil, John Clayton, Miss Norreys, Harry Eversfield, and the rest, the Court was, perhaps, the most popular theatre in London ; so too was Terry's during the run of Sir Arthur Pinero's *Sweet Lavender*, but the luck did not stick, and the place, after a lengthy period as a Cinema show, is again to be a theatre proper.

Talking of Penley recalls the extraordinary success he scored as the Rev. Robert Spalding in *The Private Secretary*, of which part, by the way, one has several times seen it stated that Sir Herbert Tree was the creator.

It is true that Tree immediately preceded Penley in the part, but the actual first player of the remarkable clergyman who did not like London, was a matter-of-fact Mr. Arthur Helmore when Mr. Charles Hawtrey's adaptation of Von Moser's farcical comedy was produced at the old theatre at Cambridge, then the property of Mr. W. B. Redfern.

Mr. Hawtrey's famous play had quite a remarkable history, for after its trial trip at Cambridge

he sought in vain for a time someone to take it off his hands and run it in London. It was offered to a friend of mine who witnessed its production at Cambridge, for five hundred pounds, but the offer was emphatically declined. Thus are the chances of fortunes lost.

In the end, the piece was put on in London at the Prince's—now Prince of Wales's Theatre—by Mr. Edgar Bruce with Tree as Spalding, Bill Hill as old Cattermole, and Miss Vane Featherstone and Miss Maude Millett as the two young ladies of the piece. Mr. Hawtrey did not play in it himself at that time.

The play was not kindly treated by the dramatic critics, and in spite of Tree's great success as the Curate, the paying Public insisted in failing to arrive in sufficient force to make it worth while to go on. And so the run came to an end.

Then Mr. Hawtrey did a very bold thing. He believed in his play, and showed the valour of his opinion by taking it to the old Globe Theatre, at that time a somewhat luckless house in Newcastle Street just off the Strand, and putting it on with himself as Douglas Cattermole, but without Tree, the one man who had really done well in it. In Tree's place, he secured W. S. Penley, who at that time was much less familiar as a comedian than as a singer of minor parts in comic opera, and who had just been appearing as Derek



von Hans in *Rip Van Winkle* at the Comedy, where Fred Leslie and Miss Violet Cameron had scored such triumphs.

When his friends heard that Mr. Hawtrey had taken the Globe for *The Private Secretary* and had engaged Penley for the part on which the entire show depended, they thought and said that he must have taken leave of his senses. But as every one knows he had done nothing of the kind.

At first it looked as if his pluck was going to avail him nothing, and houses were small; then things changed slowly but surely, business began to pick up, and the piece settled into one of the greatest financial successes ever known in stage-land, for it ran for close upon three years and made a big fortune for Mr. Hawtrey, a considerable portion of which he soon after lost when he took Her Majesty's Theatre, and produced amongst other things the tremendously costly three-hour long ballet *Excelsior*.

I mentioned that Penley came in a single spring from singing a minor part in *Rip Van Winkle* to be one of the most famous and popular actors in London, and in like fashion Fred Leslie was another instance of an actor coming out of romantic opera to become a comedian pure and simple as he did when he went to the old Gaiety, where he stayed so long under George Edwardes' management, dividing honours in many productions with Nellie Farren.

Somehow the Gaiety has always been the nearest approach to a Stock Company of any theatre in town, the same set of players staying there for years, and appearing in each production as it came along.

In John Hollingshead's time "The Merry Family" were the chief mainstays of the place and included the famous quartette Edward Terry, Nellie Farren, Kate Vaughan, and Edward Royce. Terry was of course the principal comedian of the burlesques then in favour, Nellie Farren the principal boy, Kate Vaughan the principal girl and chief dancer—and she *could* dance—dividing honours in this respect with Mr. Royce who was in those days a dancer of quite remarkable grace and agility. Other well-known Gaiety comedians of that time were Tom Squire, very tall and thin, Johnny Dallas, rather short and fat, Frank Wyatt, a very agile dancer in his day, Willie Elton also excessively nimble, and E. J. Henley, a brother of the famous William Ernest Henley, the poet and one time editor of *The National Observer*, which in earlier days was known as *The Scott's Observer*. Then there was Miss Phyllis Broughton and Miss Connie Gilchrist or Lady Orkney as she is now, and many more.

When John Hollingshead took George Edwardes into partnership at the old Gaiety, things were more or less in a transient state. Burlesque of the old sort was becoming very frayed at the edges,

the Public was showing a desire for something different, and the first musical production the twain were concerned with, was *The Vicar of Wide-Awake-Field*, a more or less modern burlesque of the big Lyceum production wherein Sir Henry Irving made so great an impression by his charming old Vicar, and Miss Ellen Terry was the erring daughter led astray by the very dashing Squire Thornhill of William Terriss. In the Gaiety version of the piece, Mr. Arthur Roberts, who had but recently forsaken the music-halls for the theatres, played the title part, and his song "The Very Wicked Vicar" will no doubt still be remembered with special joy by many.

It was when Hollingshead dropped out, and George Edwardes got the Gaiety into his own hands, that he cast about for a new comedian suited to the musical comedies he then and there began to produce, and with that wonderful foresight of his for seeing possibilities not apparent to most people, he lighted on handsome, sweet-voiced Fred Leslie, who was in the midst of his remarkable success as Rip at the Comedy.

The engagement at first sight did not seem at all a suitable one, for the differences between a Gaiety show and romantic opera were wide apart indeed, and no one was less sure of its likelihood of success than Fred himself, who told me that it was only the very generous terms offered him which tempted him to make the plunge. However,

George Edwardes then and there gave one of the many proofs of his extraordinary judgment. He was quite certain that Leslie would be a great success at the Gaiety, and, as every one remembers, Edwardes was thoroughly justified in this opinion, and there Fred stayed, with occasional breaks caused by visits to America and the Provinces, till his all too early death.

During his absence E. J. Lonnen, who had played seconds to him, came into his own on several occasions, notably in *Miss Esmerelda*.

Leslie's successor as principal Gaiety comedian, was also a surprise to the general public but not entirely to my humble self, for one day the good George Edwardes, in whose office I happened to be, told me he was in great doubt as to whom he should engage to follow Leslie, and asked me a number of questions concerning "that young fellow Hicks" who was then playing at the Court Theatre in a revue called *Under the Clock*, the joint work of himself and Charles Brookfield. I had sung the praises of my old-young friend Seymour at considerable length in print, and I proceeded to enlarge upon his qualities then. "He's just the man for you," I said. "He is young, very bright, and nice looking. He can sing, and dance a bit, is as clever as paint, and with a little more experience will do big things."

Well, one result of our conversation was that an emissary on whose judgment George Edwardes

could entirely depend, was sent along to the Court to observe how Mr. Hicks shaped that evening, and the report he brought back was so favourable that George himself went to see him the following night, and as a result Mr. Hicks and his charming wife Miss Ellaline Terriss were engaged to go to the Gaiety for a considerable period, and there they stayed for many moons, playing the principal parts in a number of highly successful musical comedies, of most of which Seymour was the author.

It was trying the young actor uncommonly highly to ask him to follow so great a favourite at the Gaiety as Fred Leslie, and to do so, moreover, in one of his most successful creations, that of Jonathan Wild in *Little Jack Sheppard*, but, as all who were present on the memorable Gaiety first night will recollect, Seymour came through the trial with flying colours, and never afterwards looked backward. He was heavily handicapped, too, for he had suffered from terrible neuralgia for some days before making his Gaiety début, and on the very afternoon of the performance, was in such agony that he boldly faced a dentist and had several teeth pulled out. I came upon him in the Strand shortly after his time of trouble, and certainly no one could have looked less like a Gaiety principal comedian than he did then. He told me afterwards that he spent the hours between that time and going to the theatre praying at the Oratory for strength to get through

his ordeal that night. Obviously his prayers were answered, for his success was considerable.

After what I may call the Hick's regime at the Gaiety, and when he departed to go into management on his own account, came the George Grossmith period, which lasted for a long time and during which "G. G." played the principal parts in many productions, several of which he wrote, and ultimately when George Edwardes died, Grossmith and his partner, Mr. Edward Laurillard, took over the control of the Gaiety till such time as they moved on elsewhere.

The extraordinary success of the Grossmith-Laurillard combination is a thing familiar to all concerned in any way with theatreland. Mr. Laurillard was of course no new comer into management, for he had been concerned with quite a number of productions at various theatres, and was, moreover, with his late partner Mr. Horace Sedger, one of the first to recognise the potentialities of the Cinema theatre, and to take very full advantage of them. I fancy he has now parted with all the picture palaces he was connected with, except the New Gallery Kinema in Regent Street, with which he still retains his very successful associations.

## CHAPTER XIX

The passing of Sir Herbert Tree—A terribly sudden ending to a great career—The last letter he wrote—His remarkably successful management—A fine character-actor—A master of make-up—How he puzzled his audience when *The Red Lamp* was produced—Tree's visit to Berlin—Max Beerbohm's retort—Sir George Alexander and the St. James's—His earlier days at the Lyceum—The first venture into management at the old Avenue—Alexander as an eccentric dancer—The romantic actor as a robust comedian—The murder of William Terris—What became of his hat?—George Alexander and the dramatic author—"A matter of moonshine"—Oscar Wilde and *Lady Windermere's Fan*—Alec's old Scotch nurse and what she thought of his profession—A very sensitive and kindly natured man—The secret of his great personal popularity.

ON the morning of the third day of July, 1917, all the papers announced the death of the famous actor-manager Sir Herbert Tree, to the great sorrow of the play-going world, and to the intense surprise of those who knew the nature of the comparatively minor trouble he had been suffering from, as well as the admirable cure he had been making at one of the nursing homes of the famous surgeon Sir Alfred Fripp, who had performed an operation upon him with apparently complete success.

On reaching my office that morning, the first of many envelopes to be opened was one whereon

the address was typed, and the mark of date and time of posting stood out clearly, "3.15 p.m., 2 July, '17." It contained a letter from the dead actor-manager, a very dear and kind friend of many years standing. "I send you my greetings from a sick-bed and I would very much like to see you, for I want to learn all about poor — (mentioning the name of a mutual friend, who was very ill at the time). I am really quite ignorant about it all and you may imagine how anxious I am to know. How about 4.30 to-morrow; could you come then? Do so if you can. I'll try to keep myself free and we can have a long talk. I trust all is going well with you. Yours as ever, Herbert B. Tree."

It was curious to read a letter from a man asking one to come and see him that day, and then to think of what seemed at the time almost an incredible thing, that Herbert Tree had gone from us for ever.

The letter must have been one of the last—perhaps the very last—he ever wrote, and it must have been posted very shortly before his terribly sudden going.

The operation had been a complete success. He had stood it excellently well, looked to be making a perfect recovery, and Sir Alfred Fripp was more than ordinarily pleased with his patient's condition, fine pluck, and high spirits, for Tree was one of his most intimate friends.



There was every reason to suppose, that all was going as well as possible, not only from the ordinary person's point of view, but also from that of the surgeon. I have seen his chart ; it was all it should have been. Everything was regular, there was no fever, no temperature. A little rest ; a few days of quiet in bed, and it seemed that everything would be right again, and that he would be back on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre.

And then the utterly unexpected happened. The ten thousand to one chance against success, came off. A tiny clot of blood floating about, went the wrong way, and the end came immediately.

It was on the afternoon of the second of July and Sir Alfred Fripp had looked in to see his patient, who was as cheerful and full of whimsical fun as usual. As he left him there was every outward sign that all was well. Tree had had a number of visitors to see him, some of whom had smoked, and when the last of these had gone about five o'clock, the nurse who was attending him said, " Don't you think, Sir Herbert, I had better open the window a little more to let the smoke out ? " And the answer was, " Yes, please, do so."

While the nurse turned to the window and in the few seconds occupied in lowering it, the hand of the Grim Reaper fell and Herbert Tree took his last call.

His loss to the British Stage was of course a very great one indeed. He was the outstanding man on the Boards. The only man who was doing really big work, and he stood for all that was best in theatreland. When Sir Henry Irving died, it seemed that no one could ever come to fill his place. Perhaps no one ever will completely do so, but Tree certainly came as close to it as possible, and at the time he died he held a position on the English Stage which was quite by itself. He controlled the chief theatre in London. His productions had been of the first order. He had been knighted by his Sovereign amidst the complete approval of his fellow-players, and of the Public generally, and he had done much to keep Shakespeare alive on our stage. Added to all this he was a man of remarkable ability in many directions other than acting, and was one of the most popular and lovable of men.

Opinions may, and do differ about him as a player, but there never were two sides as to splendour of his productions, and of his earnestness and sincerity of purpose. My own opinion is one which I ventured to express to him, that he was a great character-actor but not a leading-man.

You have only to think of his Macari in *Called Back* ; Svengali in *Trilby* ; Sir Woodbine Grafton in *Peril* ; Spalding in *The Private Secretary* ; Baron Hartfeld in *Jim the Penman* ; and of his

wonderful Demetrius in *The Red Lamp*, the piece with which he opened his first managerial campaign at the Comedy Theatre in 1887, to follow my meaning.

His skill in make-up was wonderful, and sometimes on first-nights of new plays wherein he was appearing, you did not recognise Tree till he spoke. This was notably so when *The Red Lamp* was produced. He was on the stage for quite a long time before the audience was aware that the fat, ponderous, stooping old Russian diplomatist, with the heavy eyebrows and white hair, was the actor-manager they had come to wish good luck to, in his new home, and it was only when he spoke that he got his "reception."

The success of *The Red Lamp* was so great financially as well as artistically, that Tree was able to secure the Haymarket, where he stayed until he took possession in April, 1897, of the rebuilt Her Majesty's Theatre, which in due course became His Majesty's.

The larger stage of the new play-house gave him the chance he had wanted of big productions such as his various Shakesperian revivals, *Rip Van Winkle*, *Ulysses*, *The Darling of the Gods*, *Faust*, and *The Last of the Dandies*, to name only a few of the big spectacular shows with which his name will always be connected.

Although he was born in London, spent almost all his life there, and was essentially English in

every possible idea and way, Tree never quite got rid of the suggestion of foreign accent inherited no doubt from his father, Mr. Julius Beerbohm, who originally hailed from Hun-Land; and, talking of that country, it will no doubt be recalled that Tree and his company in 1907 visited Berlin and were made much of by the Arch-Hun and his subjects.

Although it is chiefly as a very admirable caricaturist that Mr. Max Beerbohm is known to the public, most of us are doubtless aware that he is the half-brother of the late Sir Herbert Tree. But before he began to draw to any great extent, he had written three slim volumes which made a lot of people smile, and a number of others very angry indeed.

Mr. Beerbohm's first book, written when he was very young, was called *The Works of Max Beerbohm*, and this was shortly afterwards followed by *More*, which is a cryptic enough title in all conscience.

But at a still more tender period, Mr. Beerbohm was wont to be somewhat mystic in his expressions, as witness the following told me by Tree.

On one occasion, in celebration of his tenth birthday, it seems that Max took a little too much sherbet or something of the kind, at the family celebration of the anniversary, whereupon Tree addressing him with sorrow in his voice said,

“Max, it is bad to be tipsy at ten.” To this the youthful Mr. Beerbohm responded in the never-to-be-forgotten words: “How can one be tipsy, when we are conscious that they are not?” And as the good Tree said, “No one could answer *that* conundrum?”

In the year following Tree’s death, Stage-Land had another severe loss, when Sir George Alexander died after a long lingering illness, and although there were never two men less alike than Tree and Alexander, there were certain points of resemblance in their work and methods.

In each case the actor was his own manager, which meant of course that he could put on what plays he chose, and cast himself for such parts as he liked. Each had a fine theatre with a distinct following of its own, for if at His Majesty’s audiences were larger as a rule than at the St. James’s, which George Alexander took over in January, 1891, and held till he died twenty-seven years later, there was a very regular following, largely attracted by the personality of the actor-manager, and as Alexander himself said he claimed to have established the St. James’s as the Premier Comedy Theatre in England.

Certainly the theatre was always a specially popular one with the gentler sex, and it was a strange night at the King Street House when the women in the audience did not at least treble the men present.

It was when he was a member of the famous Irving company at the Lyceum, that George Alexander first attracted attention, and what a wonderful company that was to be sure, for in addition to "The Chief" and the leading lady, Miss Ellen Terry, there were such famous players as William Terriss, Forbes Robertson, Winifred Emery, George Alexander, and Mrs. Stirling to name only a few of them.

Although he had been a member of the Lyceum fold for some time previously, and had accompanied Henry Irving to America, it was not till the great Lyceum production of *Faust* that Alexander got his first outstanding chance. In this he played Valentine, H. B. Conway, one of the handsomest of actors then on the stage, and the husband of the well-known actress Miss Kate Phillips, being specially imported to the company to play the title part.

This engagement was not a success. Conway was an excellent actor of certain parts, but *Faust* was assuredly not one of these, and after tackling it for a week or so he became ill, and resigned, his place being taken by Alexander, who made a big hit in the part, and later on the Gattis at the Adelphi—at that time the home of melodrama—seeking for a likely hero to follow in Terriss's footsteps, secured him as their leading man in *London Day by Day* in 1889.

By the way, the mention of poor Terriss's name

recalls rather a curious thing. It will be recollected that the actor was foully murdered by a lunatic as he was entering the Adelphi Theatre, at which he was leading man at the time. Immediately after the stabbing, Terriss was carried in at the stage-door, and some one who stood by said, “ Where is his hat ? ” Search was made for it at once, and although the terrible deed had only been committed a few seconds before, the hat was gone, nor was it ever recovered. Who took it, I wonder ?

It was while playing at the Adelphi that hearing the old Avenue Theatre, on the site of which the Playhouse now stands, was going a-begging, Alexander took the house, producing there a wildly farcical-comedy called *Doctor Bill*, in which he intended to create the part of Dr. William Brown and introduce the famous “ Kangaroo Dance ” with Miss Edith Kenward, but as he was not free to do so, Mr. Fred Terry was called in to keep the part warm till Alexander was ready to take it over, which he did shortly after.

The new manager ought to have made a good deal more money than he did with his first venture, but without recalling too closely certain happenings at that time, it may be said that a lot of the coin which ought to have reached him failed to do so. However, that’s an old story now. Anyhow later on in the same year, Alexander

gave up the Avenue, and took over the St. James's, where he opened with *Sunlight and Shadow*.

Of the many successful plays which the new manager produced at the St. James's it is unnecessary to tell, but here is an account of a play which he did *not* produce, and concerning which he told me himself.

A certain fairly well-known dramatic author came to see him one day at the St. James's, and suggested that life would present a more glowing aspect to him than it then did, if "Alec" would lend him a hundred pounds. Having been as repeatedly tapped as many better and worse men had been before him, and being very familiar with the sound financial advice of Polonius, the actor-manager responded that much as he would like to oblige the author, he had so many calls on him—and so on, and so forth. But he added, "Will fifty pounds be of any use to you?" "Yes, I believe it will," retorted the other. "So-and-so has a play of mine and may accept it at any moment. I can easily pay you back in a month's time."

"Well," said Alexander, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you have fifty pounds but not as a loan. You are a clever fellow; write me a play for the St. James's, and I'll give you fifty pounds now in advance of fees of five per cent on the gross, whenever the play is acted. Sit down and draw up an agreement between us now."



"Right you are," said the author, and proceeded to do the deed. "By the way," he said, looking up, "what shall we call the play? I must fill in a title you know." "Oh well," replied Alec, "call it 'All Moonshine.'" And the thing was done. Exit the author with fifty pounds in his pocket. A week later he reappeared, and said, "I have paragraphed the fact that you have commissioned me to write you a play. Are you particularly keen on keeping the American rights or can I deal with them?" "Well," said Alexander, "the English rights are good enough for me. I'll present you with the American ones."

"Now that's really very good of you," said the author, "for the fact is that Frohman, hearing you had commissioned me to write a play for the St. James's, has offered me a hundred pounds in advance of the American rights." "That's capital," said Alexander, "good; you take it."

The sequel to the story is, that the play was never written; that the author pocketed one hundred and fifty pounds; and that he unfortunately shortly afterwards died!

Here too is another yarn of Alec's concerning a play which was produced with great success alike to its author and to its producer.

One day Oscar Wilde, at that time in the height of his fame as a celebrity, or notoriety, whichever you like, gave Alexander a play in blank verse to read which appealed to the manager immensely.

However, he thought it too expensive a production to embark upon in the earlier days of his managerial career, so he returned it, at the same time asking Wilde to write him a modern play, offering him one hundred pounds in advance of fees.

Wilde took the money, and for some months after Alexander heard nothing more of him or his play. One day, however, came a letter from the author asking the manager to name a time when he would hear the play read, and as Alexander himself said, "I shall never forget the delight I experienced in hearing him read *Lady Windermere's Fan*, for that was the play he brought me."

"Do you like it?" he asked at the end of the reading. "Like it," I said, "like is not the word. It is simply wonderful." "Well," said Wilde, "I am rather pushed just now, and want some money: what will you give for it?" "I'll give a thousand pounds with pleasure," said Alexander. "A thousand pounds!" exclaimed Wilde, "you don't surely mean that. Do you mean a thousand pounds in ready money?" "Yes, certainly," said Alexander, "I'll give you a cheque for it right away." "Well," said Wilde, "I'd like the money, but if you believe in the piece as much as that, I don't think I'll sell it to you right out—no, the more I think of it, the less I want to sell—I'll take a percentage." And he did; of course taking a good many thousand

pounds in fees, instead of the single thousand he nearly accepted.

Although Wilde was wise in his generation in believing in Alexander's judgment, all who knew the actor-manager did not hold it in so high an opinion. For instance, there was his old Scotch nurse, who, like so many others of her kind, regarded the calling of the actor as everything that was vile and unholy. Alexander told me that most of his Scotch relatives were opposed to his Stage career more or less mildly, but the antipathy of the old nurse in question was remarkable. She quite believed that her erstwhile charge was on the high road to destruction.

One day after he had begun to make headway in his career, and was indeed at the Lyceum, Alexander saw his old friend and expressed the hope that she had overcome her prejudices.

"Indeed I have not, Mister George," she said. "I conseeder it is an awfu way to get a leeving, but I do hear that you have made a heap of money at it, and I hope that you will soon retire so that you may have time to repent and get your peace made wee yer Maker."

Unlike most actors, or even actor-managers, Alexander was a most methodical man of great business ability, and many of those who only knew him slightly believed him to be possessed of a very matter-of-fact, unemotional personality. Beneath this exterior, however, there was

a singularly sensitive and easily-wounded nature, and of that I had proof one evening at the St. James's.

I had received a note during the day from his secretary enclosing a couple of tickets for the piece he was then appearing in, saying that Mr. Alexander, as he then was, particularly wanted to see me on a matter of business if I could call on him at the end of the first act.

I did not know Alexander personally at the time, though I afterwards came to know and like him well, and I had not the smallest idea what he could want with me.

However, I went to the St. James's, and at the end of the act was taken to his dressing-room, or rather to one adjoining it.

In a few minutes he walked in, just as he had been on the stage, the make-up of course looking curious close at hand.

He came towards me as I thought very stagily, and in a singular emotional voice said at once with no preliminary, "You don't know me, do you?" I replied that I had not had the pleasure of meeting him till then.

"Well," said he, "you've nothing against me?" "Nothing," said I. "Why do you ask?" Whereupon he pulled out a couple of clippings from a paper sent him by a Press-cutting Association marked "From the Pelican." "I don't mind fair criticism," he said, "but I do mind spiteful

personal attacks like these. Surely, man, you can't defend that sort of thing ? ”

“ No I can't,” I said, as I glanced at the objectionable paragraphs in question, “ but I had better tell you at once that your Press-cutting people have made a mistake, and that these are not from my paper.”

There was a slight pause, and then “ Good Lord ! ” he said, “ have I made a mistake and done you an injustice ? I don't know how to express my regret. What can I do ? ”

“ You can shake hands, give me a drink, and promise to write a little yarn for my Christmas number,” I replied. All of which things he did ; and from that time on, George Alexander was a good kind friend to me for whom I had ever the warmest regard.

I merely mention this little matter to show that he was by no means the unemotional, indifferent, wooden man, so many people believed him to be off the stage. On the contrary, he was an ultra-sensitive kindly natured fellow, desiring nothing better than to live on good terms with all he came in contact with, and his kindly, generous, gentle nature endeared him to very many.

## CHAPTER XX

The Genesis of the Christmas Pelican—A rather remarkable production—The extraordinary list of authors—The strongest cast not merely in London but in the world—Henry Irving, Sarah Bernhardt, and Herbert Tree as story-tellers—The editorial difficulties of dealing with the eminent scribes—The Maharaja of Cooch Behar—A fine sportsman and a very “white” native—His theatrical supper party, and what occurred at it—The lightning change of the Maharaja from an English gentleman to an Eastern potentate—What he said to his dependant—The extraordinary effect his words produced—Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in real life—My main object in starting *The Pelican*—How I was fortunately able to realise it—How the war nearly finished us—but didn’t—I decide to retire—The sale of *The Pelican* to a syndicate—Out of the pull and push—And very glad and thankful to be so.

FOR one reason at least the Christmas number of *The Pelican* was rather a remarkable production, and that was on account of the extraordinary list of authors who were good enough to allow themselves to be lured into contributing to its pages each year.

As perhaps some of those who read these lines are aware, the Christmas *Pelican* always consisted of short stories told by the most prominent and distinguished actors and actresses, and although upon one or two occasions certain celebrities who were not immediately connected with

the Stage, were included in the list of authors, the general rule was that the players were the things.

It was a pleasant and certainly very popular idea to get those who were largely written about in the course of the year in the columns of the paper to furnish the contents of the Christmas Number, and whether the plan was an entirely novel one, or merely a repetition of one that had been used before, no other journal, to my knowledge, during the eight-and-twenty years I conducted *The Pelican* did anything of the kind.

It was not an easy job to induce the large number of very distinguished men and women, each very busily engaged in his or her own calling, to turn authors even once a year, and if I had not had the advantage of knowing most of my eminent contributors intimately, I fear I should have never brought the thing off.

The chief difficulty was not to get the theatrical narrators to promise me contributions, for actors and actresses are always so good-natured that they made no difficulty about that ; it was the really remarkable trouble which invariably occurred in inducing the distinguished scribes to actually weigh in with their works which annually greyed my locks to a very considerable extent. However, by some means or other, we always managed to get all the contributions in at the last moment, just as the master-printer was beginning to rend his hair, cast dust upon his

breast, and make oath before Heaven that the Annual could not by any human possibility be printed by the contract time. The great fact is that it was always done, and we were never a day late in publication.

When you consider how vast a proportion of the Public pays its good money every night to see and hear the popular stage favourites, it was only natural that a large number of them should have willingly paid their sixpences to come into more or less personal touch with some thirty-five to forty leading stars of the theatrical firmament, by way of their usually amusing personal experiences narrated in our paper, accompanied by their latest and most attractive portraits.

The list of my Christmas authors included, almost without exception, the leading actors and actresses who charmed us between the years 1889 and 1917, in the Christmas of which latter year the last Annual produced under my control appeared.

Among the many distinguished people who have "gone on ahead" who told their Christmas stories for us, were Sir Henry Irving, Sir Herbert Tree, and Sir George Alexander on many occasions, Mr. Wilson Barrett, Sir Augustus Harris of Drury Lane, Miss Florence St. John, Mr. Lewis Waller, Mr. Fred Leslie, Miss Nellie Farren, Miss Kate Vaughan, Mr. John Hollingshead of the old Gaiety, Mr. Arthur Williams, Mr. Edmund Payne,



Mr. George Edwardes, Mr. Teddy Lonnen, Mr. Charles Danby, Mr. Dan Leno, and Mr. Barney Barnato of South African fame, who had a certain amount to do with stage-life prior to becoming a several-times-over millionaire.

Madame Sarah Bernhardt was kind enough on three occasions to contribute to our columns, and her sprightly country-women Mlle. Delysia and Mlle. Gaby des Lys, like M. Morton, were members of our Christmas staff on more than one occasion.

Among the many sweet singers whom I induced to turn authors were Miss Violet Cameron, Miss Ruth Vincent, Miss Constance Drever, Miss Isabel Jay, Miss Marie Tempest, Miss Lily Elsie, and Signor Caruso. While the managers, in addition to those already named, included among others my good friends Mr. Frank Curzon, Mr. George Dance, Mr. Cyril Maude, Sir Alfred Butt, Mr. Arthur Collins, Mr. Dennis Eadie, Mr. Matheson Lang, Mr. Frederick Harrison, Mr. Robert Courtneidge, Mr. Vedrenne, Mr. Tom B. Davis, Mr. Robert Evett, Mr. Charles Cochran, and Mr. Gerald du Maurier.

Our dancing contributors included at various times Mlle. Genee, Mlle. Lydia Kyasht, Miss Lettie Lind, Miss Sylvia Grey, Miss Florence Levey, Miss Olive May, Miss Ivy Shilling, and Miss Katie Seymour ; while among the more serious players may be mentioned Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Brown Potter, Miss Ethel Irving, Mr. Weedon Grossmith, Miss

Agnes Hewitt, Miss Violet Vanbrugh, Miss Gladys Cooper, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Mr. Arthur Bouchier, Miss Iris Hoey, Mr. Charles Hawtrey, Mr. Eille Norwood, Mr. Sydney Valentine, and Mr. H. B. Irving.

We were always strong in our musical comedy contributors, and one recalls Mr. George Graves, Mr. George Robey, Mr. G. P. Huntley, Miss Ethel Levey, Mr. Arthur Roberts, Miss Ada Reeve, Mr. Huntley Wright, Miss Shirley Kellog, Mr. George Grossmith, Miss Gertie Millar, Mr. W. H. Berry, Miss Ellaline Terris, Mr. Seymour Hicks, Miss Phyllis Dare, Mr. Arthur Playfair, Miss José Collins, Mr. Wilkie Bard, Miss Violet Loraine, Miss Florence Smithson, Mr. Joseph Coyne, Miss Dorothy Ward, and Miss Edna May among many others.

Mr. Harry Grattan, as clever with his pencil as with his pen, always drew his story, and did so very well, while the one and only Swears usually sent us something funny also.

I mention these names—not by any means all the famous ones—to give those who never saw the Christmas *Pelican* an idea of how remarkable our lists of authors always were, and it will be readily believed that from the nature of its contents, the Annual was always a very big success financially and otherwise.

As I have said, there used to be a good deal of trouble in digging the stories out of most of my

gifted authors, though there were exceptions, and none was more prompt in sending in, nor more precise in writing exactly the number of lines he said he would, than Sir George Alexander. On the other hand, none was more difficult to land, than the annual contribution of my dear friend Herbert Tree, who after pointing out that he was specially busy and could only manage something short of say eighteen or twenty lines, usually sent some thirty or forty pages, and, if you know anything at all of the polite art of condensing, you will see how maddening a thing it must have been, to cut a story of forty pages to something like a hundred lines, keep in the plot, and the sense, and simultaneously retain the friendship of the author as well !

A contribution which would no doubt have been inertesting if it had appeared, was that promised me by the late Maharaja of Cooch Behar, who was, as many of my readers will recall, a distinguished soldier, a great sportsman, and one of the " whitest " and most English natives of India who ever lived. Cooch Behar was thoroughly British in all his ideas and conversation, and when you heard him talk as he did without a trace of native accent, it was always something of a shock when you looked suddenly at him to find that he was not really a white man, so far as his skin was concerned.

Only on one occasion did I ever know Cooch

Behar do or say anything out of the common which specially recalled his native birth, and no doubt some who read these lines will remember the occurrence to which I now refer.

The Maharaja, who was very keen about what the late Maurice Farkoa used to sing of as "Gay Bohemiah," and the theatrical portion of it in particular, gave a big supper party in a private room at what was then the New Lyric Club, and many of the brightest men and prettiest women in London were among his guests.

It was during this supper party that one of his equerries, or secretaries, or someone of the sort, took rather more champagne than was good for him, and like Bottom the Weaver had an exposition of sleep come upon him.

The young Indian was seated opposite me, and I fear I took considerable joy, in a quiet way, in seeing his head slowly subside on his plate.

Cooch Behar, seated at the end of the table, was talking to one of the fairest and most photographed of our musical-comedy actresses, and was telling her a story which made her smile considerably, when all of a sudden, his eye fell on his unhappy retainer.

In a moment the dark complexioned Englishman became a Native. Springing to his feet, he extended his hand towards the overcome one, and glaring at him, in truly horrific manner, said something to him, quite quietly in Hindustani.

What his words were, I am not aware, but I do know that they produced a most marvellous effect on the man addressed, for he crouched down on the floor, put his hands over his head, as though to ward off a blow, mumbled words, doubtless of deep contrition, certainly expressive of the greatest terror, and then fled from the room. Of course there was a general pause for a second or two in the hilarity of the occasion, and this was broken by the fair one saying, "Tell us what you said to him." "Oh, nothing much," replied the Maharaja, as he sat down again, with a smile, and was promptly once more an ordinary English gentleman, "just something that he will remember!"

The changes from the Englishman to the Native, and then back from the Native to the calm, smiling, somewhat dark-complexioned Englishman, were extraordinarily sudden and dramatic, and recalled nothing so much as Richard Mansfield's quick changes in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

When I founded *The Pelican* in 1889, I did so with one main object in view, which was that as soon as I had saved a certain sum, which I fixed upon as sufficient for needs and comfort, I would gracefully retire, and if possible sell the paper. I had no idea of toiling on till I was an old man, possessed of neither the inclination nor the ability to enjoy life in my own way, and as my ideas were quite modest, and I had not the smallest

desire to be very rich, even if I had had the chance of becoming so, the time came along when I was fortunately able to do as I had intended.

I meant to get out at the end of 1914, but then the Great War arrived, and believing there would be no chance then of finding a purchaser for the paper, I resolved that I would hold on till that was over. But Fate was against this, for the terrible business became a much larger and more overwhelming matter than had seemed at all probable at the start.

Gradually all my people in the office, one after another, went to the Front to do their duty, till of the staff who were with me at the beginning of the war, not one single man remained. Even the good lad who had been my office boy went to France like the rest, and one would not have had things otherwise, for of course the only thing which really mattered was the winning of the war, and breaking up the Huns who caused it.

It is a difficult thing to replace people who have been with you for many years, and who understand your business from start to finish, but with new-comers I carried on as well as I could. Then in due course these were taken, and so on and on. The cost of distributing the journal rose to a vast extent. Wages of all sorts, even when one could get the right people to earn them, did the same; while the difficulties of obtaining paper became a sort of mad joke. Then my chief partner in the

concern, my cousin, General H. B. Kirk, died at the Front.

Up till then *The Pelican* had never lost financially at all. On the other hand, profits had gone and did not look like returning until peace came along, and as the prime idea of the paper was that of any other business, to make money for its proprietors, we decided to fold up our tents and suspend publication until the war troubles were over. And just then, when I was kicking myself for not accepting one of several offers I had had to purchase the paper some little time before the war started, a bit of great good fortune came along in the representative of a syndicate, who made us an offer to take over the business on fair terms, and these under all the circumstances we gladly accepted; and thus at the end of 1917, after the Christmas Number had been produced, we handed over the whole thing, lock, stock and barrel to the new proprietors, very glad indeed to have got out of matters so comfortably and well, and to be relieved of all further responsibilities, for, believe me, there is a great deal of responsibility and worry in running even a small paper such as ours was, although there were certainly lots of fun and interest to be got out of it as well.

I had no cause to regret starting *The Pelican* and keeping it going for over twenty-eight years, and I had little in handing it over to others after that time. Of course one had a certain amount

of sentiment about the matter, but twenty-eight years is a long time, and I felt I was acting wisely in taking advantage of the opportunity offered me.

The paper had been a good and useful friend to me and others, but there comes a time to most men and women when they feel they want to be relieved of business anxieties, and to take things a good deal more easily than they have hitherto been doing, and such was the case with me. I had had enough of the pull-and-push of Fleet Street, and though I had had lots of good fortune in it, for which I trust I am properly thankful, as well as a deal of interest and amusement, I was quite glad to kiss my hand to "the street of adventure," and as Miss Letty Lind used to sing in *The Geisha*, "Bid it a polite good-day."



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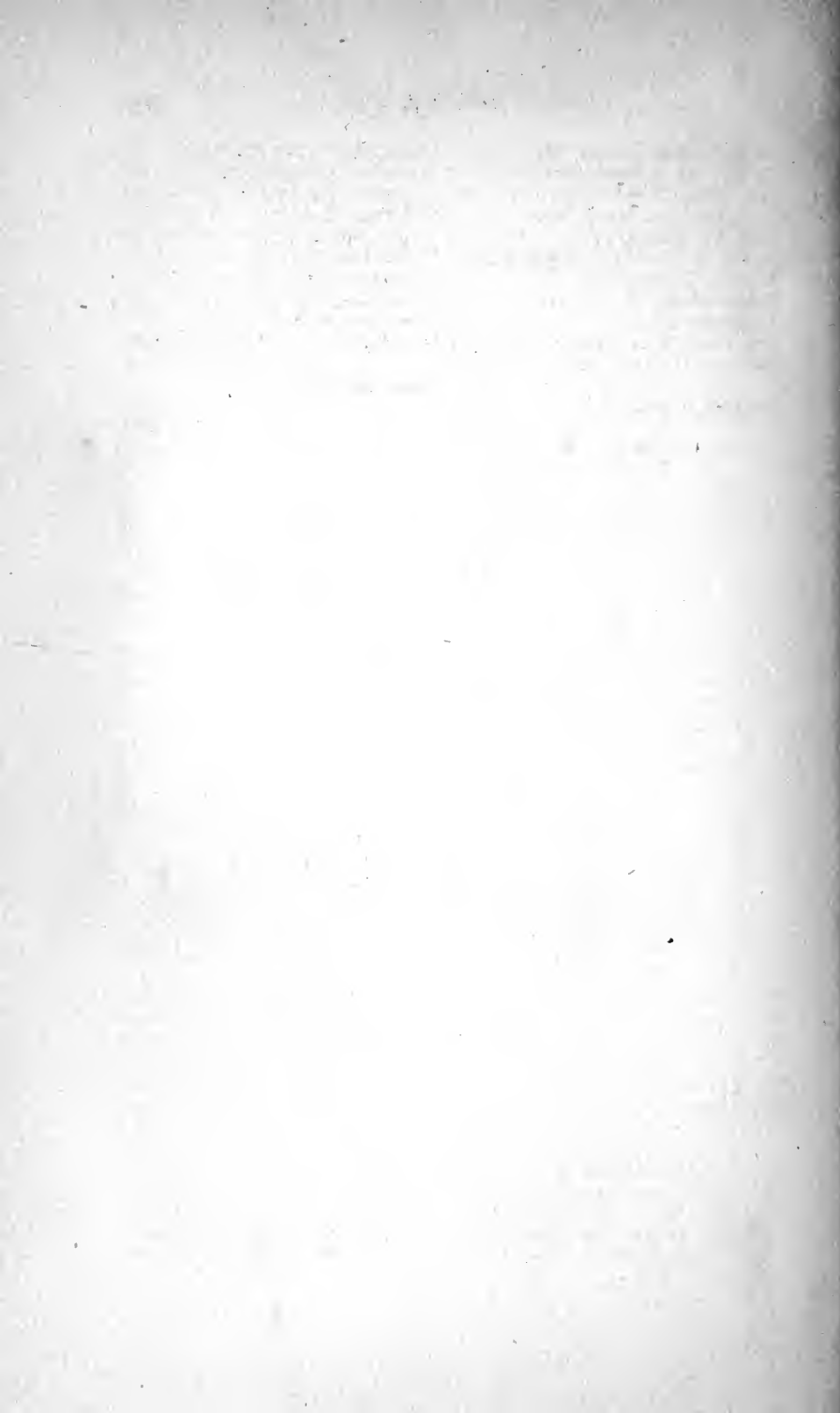
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